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# THE DAYS OF THE COTTON KINGDOM

PART 1: THE COTTON KINGDOM

BY WILLIAM E. DODD

PART 2: THE ANTI-SLAVERY CRUSADE

BY JESSE MACY



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PART I  
THE COTTON KINGDOM

A CHRONICLE  
OF THE OLD SOUTH  
BY  
WILLIAM E. DODD

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# THE COTTON KINGDOM

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## CHAPTER I

### THE LOWER SOUTH IN 1850

THE region which in the middle of the last century was known as the Cotton Kingdom extended a distance of more than a thousand miles from South Carolina to the neighborhood of San Antonio, Texas. The breadth of this country, from north to south, ranged from two hundred miles in Carolina and Texas to six or seven hundred miles in the Mississippi Valley. The land on which cotton could be easily grown measured perhaps as much as four hundred thousand square miles in 1850, if we count Texas, Arkansas, and Florida, which were then, however, yielding only small crops. Large areas in the lower South were not suited to cotton culture, although they contributed to the cotton kingdom other economic resources of no small

value. The pine barrens of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana could produce immense quantities of lumber; and the hills and mountains of the two Carolinas, Georgia, and Alabama supplied a large portion of the grain and the whisky consumed on the plantations.

The cotton belt is a well-watered country with an annual rainfall almost twice as great as that of Illinois or New York. Moreover the snows of the lower Appalachians which lie upon the densely wooded highlands and towering mountains during half the year are carried off through the eastern half of the cotton country by numerous rivers whose average volume is as great as that of the Susquehanna or the Ohio. In addition to these large streams of water there are thousands of smaller rivers, rising among the hills and struggling through the marshes of the low country, which enrich the land and furnish unsurpassed facilities for transportation. In lower South Carolina and Georgia the network of navigable waters brings every parish into touch with Charleston or other coast towns. Farther west the Chattahoochee, the Tombigbee, the Yazoo, the Mississippi itself, the Red, the Sabine, the Trinity, the Brazos, and the Colorado form systems of communication

which make it easy to market all sorts of crops — particularly cotton, which can be hauled profitably a hundred miles to the river wharves. It is thus a fact of great importance in the study of the lower South that the larger part of the cotton region, somewhat like the tobacco region of colonial times, is within easy reach of Atlantic or Gulf ports.

The soil of the cotton belt, though not so fertile as that of the upper Mississippi valley, was exceedingly productive. In South Carolina and Georgia it had a reddish hue like that of the Virginia up-country; in Alabama and Mississippi it was dark like that of the prairie region of the Middle West; and everywhere it was soft and easily tillable. It produced corn as readily as cotton, but wheat did not thrive on so loose and open a soil. The seasons were so long that two or often three crops of vegetables were raised in a year, with the warm sun and abundant rains as the benevolent allies of the farmer. Peas, potatoes, beans, and fruit could be grown so quickly and abundantly that the problem of subsistence during the Civil War, for example, was much simpler than in any of the European countries fighting in the Great War.

But before the cotton-planters overran the country during the two decades preceding the beginning of this story, this area was virgin country and, with the exception of certain prairie districts, was covered with dense forests, while its river-bottoms were still tangled, impenetrable swamps. And even as late as 1860 the clearing of new lands was a large part of the planter's work. This was done by cutting away the brambles and dense undergrowth and then "deadening" the larger trees by a process of belting or taking away the bark near the ground and thus preventing further growth. This clearing of the forests let the sunlight fall upon the soil and enabled the planter to produce his first crop at a minimum of expense. But the tall, dead trees, from which the winds tore off branches and strewed them over the ground, gave the countryside a somber, despoiled appearance, and seemed the skeletons of the monarchs of the forest crying aloud against the desecration of nature and the sheer waste of the finest timber in the world.

The immediate profits of cotton-growing were so much more easily realized than the remote rewards of conservation that the spoliation of timber-lands continued with a ruthlessness unparalleled elsewhere



in the world. Men became hardened to this work until the felling of trees became a pastime; and when there was nothing else for slaves to do, they were sent to the "new grounds" to cut timber and burn logs with the idea that older land would soon need to be abandoned and the new be added to the arable fields. West of South Carolina the land was bought at government sales at a dollar and a quarter an acre or was even seized without the formality of a purchase by squatters who entered the public domain, built their cabins, cleared patches of land, and then defied the Federal officials to oust them. The ease with which one might raise a crop of cotton and the relatively large returns which it brought drew men of all classes to the lower South. Thousands of square miles of rich lands within easy distance of navigable rivers gave the people of the region a sense of new opportunity, a feeling that the world belongs to him who can exploit it, and a restless craving for a new life and wide acres—all of which influenced profoundly not only the lower South but the whole course of American history. Between 1820 and 1850 almost anything seemed possible to the enterprising man of the cotton country.

Until 1830 Indian tribes held immense tracts in

Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. The Cherokees, the Creeks, the Choctaws, and the Chickasaws counted many thousand warriors; they dwelt upon good cotton lands and, what was worse, they had been taught many of the arts of civilization by the Federal Government and had been encouraged to become orderly citizens of the United States. This policy tended to make of the Indian a permanent holder of his land; and in many, many instances these "wards of the nation" had become owners of good homes, masters of slaves, and successful cotton-planters.

The planters of Georgia first, and later those of the other States who coveted these lands with a covetousness unimagined by the kingly exploiter of Naboth's vineyard in ancient times, vowed that the Indians should not be allowed to develop settled, civilized communities. Since the planters were represented in Congress and the natives had recourse only to executive protection, the contest was most unequal; and, when President Jackson gave the Indians over to the tender mercies of their enemies, there was no help for them. The planters had their way, and the Indian lands were rapidly converted into cotton plantations. Pretty cottages and squalid wigwams, fertile fields and wild

hunting-grounds, negro slaves, horses, and farming implements all had to be sacrificed without any other reparation than doles of money and such lands as the Indian could settle beyond the Red River.

Having secured the vast area of land, the planters had then to obtain the labor requisite to cultivate their new acres. Between the close of the second war with England and the annexation of Texas this problem solved itself. On the river-bottoms of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, or in the counties which bordered on the piedmont region of those States, there were more than a million slaves whose numbers doubled every twenty years. Since the demand for tobacco had not greatly increased since 1800, there was no profitable employment for these growing hordes of blacks. The owner of slaves in this region could not move to the up-country west of the Blue Ridge, for there were no roads or canals by which to transport the wheat and corn which would be his chief crops in the new country. If he went still farther west to Kentucky or Missouri, he found tobacco-growing already well past the stage of profitable employment of slaves. There were left the wide prairies of Indiana and Illinois, but as the laws of

those States did not recognize slavery the well-to-do Southerner could not go there except at the sacrifice of the larger part of his property.

The slaveholder of the older South might emigrate to the lower South, taking his negroes with him, or he might sell his servants and eke out a living for himself and his family on the old homestead. It was a hard choice, but it could not well be avoided. Thousands emigrated and added their numbers and wealth to the cotton belt; other thousands sold their slaves and thus added to the increasing volume of labor needed to clear the forests and grow the cotton crops of the lower South. Year after year masters and slaves found their way to the new economic El Dorado, and year after year the influence and power of the planters became more evident to the rest of the country.

In the tobacco country or among the foothills of the older South another and larger class of people found that society was fast hardening around them and was compelling them to take subordinate social stations. They likewise emigrated, and many, very many, of them went to the Northwest, where they "took up" lands and raised just enough grain and pork to sustain their families.

Even more of them went to Alabama and Mississippi, where they obtained a small tract of land, bought a negro with their first crop of cotton, and set up as planters "on the make." These pioneers became the most resolute and uncompromising of all the enemies of the Indians and the most ardent advocates of the institution of slavery.

Thus practically the whole increase of the slave and the white population in the older South was emigrating and most of it was going to the new cotton region. In some counties of the seaboard States, such as Virginia, the population decreased by half in one or two decades, and everywhere the lands and houses of well-to-do people declined in value. Jefferson's magnificent home sold in 1829 for about \$3000; Madison struggled manfully but in vain to avoid disposing of his family servants; and John Randolph talked about running away from his plantation to avoid bankruptcy. What was the reason for this state of affairs?

Old Virginia and her neighbors were caught between the upper and the nether economic millstones. Disavow it as they would, their most profitable product was the slave who could be sold. Negroes alone increased in value. It is no wonder that statesmen of the older South saw in this

traffic a means of rehabilitating their declining commonwealths.<sup>1</sup>

The census of 1850 gives the lower South, including Arkansas, 2,137,000 white people and 1,841,000 blacks, nearly all of whom were slaves — a total population of nearly 4,000,000. The great majority of whites lived in counties where slavery had little influence; and nearly all the slaves lived in the cotton belt, that is, in the districts within easy reach of the rivers. The upbuilding of this region had been accomplished almost entirely within thirty years, and the period of rapid growth and change had now come to a close.

Practically all the produce of these lower Southern States was exported. Their cotton sold in 1850 for \$102,000,000; their sugar, for \$14,800,000; and their rice, for \$2,600,000 — a total of \$119,400,000. The exports of the whole country were only \$203,000,000 in 1850, but while the larger part of these exports thus originated in the cotton States, less than a fourth of all the imports came through Southern ports. Charleston, for example, exported from \$8,000,000 to \$10,000,000 worth of goods

<sup>1</sup> The lure of the lower South drew also from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, enterprising and ambitious young men, like Sergeant Prentiss and John A. Quitman, who in a few years became great planters and influential public leaders.



each year, but imported scarcely over \$2,000,000. The balance of trade was also against Mobile and other Southern cities. But because nearly half the people of the cotton States were property, the per capita wealth of the planter was much greater than that of the Easterner; and, notwithstanding the most unfavorable balance of trade against his section, he made great display of his wealth.

Rapidly increasing wealth makes one hunger the more for still greater wealth and a wider area for one's operations. Even before the Indians had all moved across the Mississippi, the planters began a most vigorous campaign for the annexation of Texas. From New Orleans, Vicksburg, and Natchez, from Mobile and Montgomery, even from Charleston and Savannah, adventurous men and prospective planters hurried into the disputed region, took up lands, and began the cultivation of cotton and the importation of slaves from the older South. They were winning for the United States a new and promising empire. With equal zest and enthusiasm men from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri hastened to join their Southern brethren and to help them wrest the coveted province from the hand of Mexico. The Revolution of 1836 brought independence to the Republic

of Texas and eventually annexation to the American Union, through a coalition of Southern and Western party groups. The Mexican War followed, and still other vast areas of land were annexed to the United States. What cotton-planters wanted, Congress somehow found a way to grant.

Nor was the case wholly different in the greater matter of the national tariff. When, in 1828, the South and the West united to place Jackson in the President's chair, it was definitely understood that the "tariff of abominations" was to be abolished or greatly reduced. The exigencies of national politics caused Jackson to falter and delay. South Carolina allowed the new President four years to make up his mind. When he was still uncertain in 1832, that State proceeded to nullify the offensive national statute; the President then threatened war; South Carolina thereupon paused; but the outcome was the definite abandonment of the higher tariff policy in favor of the lower rates of the compromise tariff of 1833. Every South Carolinian thought that the planters had once again had their way; and South Carolinians were scattered over all the cotton States.

If ever people were taught to believe themselves invincible in politics, it was the people of the cotton

country during the two decades which preceded 1850. A vast region of rich cotton lands had been rapidly opened up to them; the natives had been driven beyond the distant Red River; a new State embracing more than two hundred and fifty thousand square miles had been annexed; and the protective tariff policy by which Eastern manufacturers sought to possess the American markets free from competition had been abandoned. Why then might not the gentleman of the lower South boast of his growing riches and of his control of national affairs?

The lower South had been and still was an outwardly irreligious, dram-drinking, and dueling section. The French priests had built a compact religious community in and about New Orleans, but they had not pushed this work up the rivers and out into the great stretches of country where plantation life was dominant. Nor was their easy-going moral system entirely adapted to the needs of rural life. The cathedral church, the monastery, and the parochial schools filled the round of the priest's life and duties. The saving of souls in distant plantations was not his especial concern. Dueling and card-playing and horse-racing were

not beyond the range of his own interests; why should he stir up a crusade against them? The faith of the Roman Catholic Church was, therefore, comparatively stagnant in the lower South. Aside from a few churches in Louisiana and Charleston, firmly established parishes in Mobile, and a diocese in Florida, this branch of the Christian Church had not become a force in the planter civilization.

If the founders of the Roman Catholic Church in the lower South were content to let the planters go their own way and to confine their activities to the larger towns, the builders of the Church of England were no more enterprising. They established their churches in Charleston, Savannah, and other towns, and set up chapels of ease in the outlying parishes — half-way houses, as it were, to the true church in the city — but they were not consumed with zeal to save the lost souls of the hordes of men who filled up the back country. Gambling and horse-racing and card-playing were to the Anglican clergy what they were to the Catholic priests, a means of hastening weary hours away. Even dueling among vestrymen of high standing was not to them one of the crimes to be denounced from the pulpit. They condoned slavery at first and later proclaimed it God's way of saving the

souls of the heathen. Good sermons were indeed read on Sabbath days in the churches of Charleston and the other cities, and many charities occupied the attention of the Episcopalians of the lower South; but these gentle ministrations did not affect the red-blooded men and women who were building in the open country the foundations of a great section of the American Union.

Men of the cotton country might live freely, might partake of the joys of this world, and might even deny the fundamentals of the Christian faith without feeling that everlasting penance must be done in the world to come. Nor was there great religious or social scruple if aristocratic blood ran in negro veins or if fine young gentlemen kept half-breed mistresses. Only one must not bring one's hybrid offspring to Mardi Gras or seat them with the family in the cathedral church in New Orleans or St. Michael's in Charleston. Men drank the best and oldest wines of France till they were wholly drunk; they built the best of theaters and engaged troupes of actors from England whose reputations for immorality would have scandalized all New England; they even lured assemblies of clergymen to witness their races and take chances on their steeds. There was thus an un-Puritan and

continental sort of life in the older communities of the young cotton kingdom which was in time wholly to disappear.

Another vanishing social group consisted of the high English gentry whose grandfathers had been received at the Court of St. James in the days of the Georges or who had chased the famous Blackbeard or who had even turned sea-robbers themselves. They, too, had made their fortunes in the unsettled eighteenth century; but in the decades which preceded 1850 they were fast disappearing from among the increasing numbers of cotton-planters. They had spread themselves over the lands of South Carolina, built their houses far inland, and mingled their blood with people of less aristocratic mold. The Pinckneys, the Rhettts, and the Petigrus were merged into the new aristocracy of the country, although they still owned houses in Charleston, held pews in the oldest churches, and made a fetish of their St. Cecilia Society, into whose sacred precincts unhallowed feet seldom dared to tread. By the middle of the century it was not so much the State of South Carolina that drew out the loyalty and devotion of the planter aristocracy; the building of a new economic and social order based on an enlarged



planter group occupied men's thoughts and purposes in much the same way that the spread of *Kultur* has become the mission of the Pan-German party of our day. South Carolina contributed most to the making of that lower South which was to dominate so large a part of the national thought in the two decades before the Civil War.

An important racial element was contributed to the life of South Carolina by the French Huguenots of high intellectual endowment and even literary culture whose ancestors had driven in family coaches and had read good books for three generations. Unsurpassed in commercial pursuits, they heaped up fortunes which made their names known on both sides of the Atlantic during the Revolution and the decades which followed the adoption of the Federal Constitution. But aristocratic groups seldom maintain themselves. The Huguenots were fast merging into the planter-lawyer class, and when cotton became king in the South, their quaint accent was about all that remained to mark them as a race apart.

In New Orleans were old French families dating back to the days of the *Grand Monarque* himself, who had houses on St. Charles, Royal, or Toulouse street, owned plantations on the river or offices

on Canal Street, and attended French opera in the evening. Their wealth was invested in slaves or sugar or cotton; their quaint old coaches were seen along the Strand or the Esplanade; and their children took dancing lessons with French masters who showed both young and old what was good form in France.

So many Spaniards had come into the colony during the Spanish rule and so many English royalists from Revolutionary America, that society was wonderfully mixed in New Orleans. All nationalities, including Germans and Italians, entered into the life of the lower Mississippi. And there were many creoles with the blood of several races in their veins. Octoroons and half-breeds and pure blacks made up the free negro population, which had a life of its own unlike that in any other city in the country. Some negroes were gentlemen with a standing amongst other gentlemen which would scandalize good Southerners of today. In New Orleans as in Charleston, there were negro owners of slaves who played a considerable part in the civic life, were among the staunchest defenders of slavery as an institution, and were bitterly opposed to all who talked of setting free their slaves.

Outwardly New Orleans was the most European of all American cities in 1850, and its music, literature, and manners were European quite as much as American. But the tone was changing. Hillhouse and Story, Slocomb and Eustis, were names of families that did not remind one of either France or Spain. And there were many street names that bespoke the influence of the Yankees who had long ruled the city with a strange lack of reverence for old things and old times. New Orleans was definitely passing from the epoch of Catholic and fur-trading supremacy to that of Protestantism and cotton. Dr. Clapp, the great Boston preacher, and General Gaines, the hero of many battles, were the visible evidences of a new era; yet it must be recognized that French influence contributed much that was valuable to the plantation system.

The hills of North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee reared thousands and tens of thousands of plain, poor folk who made the bone and sinew of the lower South. They knew nothing of the gentle ways of Charleston or of the French manners of New Orleans. They built their cabins all over the up-country from what is now Charlotte to Atlanta; they overran northern Alabama and the Tombigbee Valley; and they "took up" lands in Mississippi

and Louisiana. It was they who made by far the larger part of the new country. While the older Virginians brought with them their slaves and their good middle-class manners, and while the gentry of Charleston and New Orleans boasted of their families and their culture, these people adhered firmly to their stern Presbyterian faith or to the warmer religious emotionalism of the Baptists and Methodists.

To be sure, many of these settlers from the poorer districts of the older South were not saints or of the stuff of which saints are made, but there were enough of the earnest and devout to make the salt for the saving of the whole social lump. Slowly these elements were merged with the older order, learned somewhat of the elegance and form which made the Carolina and Louisiana stocks so attractive, and contributed the largest element to the new society which the world always associates with cotton and slavery.

For the moment a good deal of the religious inheritance from Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley, which the "new light" preachers had delivered to the poorer white people of the South, was lost in the migration to the cotton country. The frontier has always been indifferent to formal

religion. The free life of the forest, the conflict with the Indians, and the struggle with nature tended to make men forget the catechism and the hymnal. Nor did the easy-going manners of the older planters, the horses, the hounds, and the illicit loves with squaws and negro women, stiffen the backbone of personal morality. An affair of honor, a duel which always followed the slightest insult among men of family, was attractive to men who were just climbing to the higher rungs of the social ladder; and where law and social solidarity developed slowly these newer men quickly learned to defend themselves, to be the avengers of their own and their family's wrongs. Every man carried his weapon in his pocket and he was not slow to use it. Public gatherings were not the safest places for men of hot tempers.

And where the weather at all seasons was open, court days, barbecues, and even religious gatherings, not infrequently were the scenes of encounters between gentlemen and of fisticuffs between men of lower degree. Feuds and lawsuits were engendered and prolonged to the great satisfaction of lawyers and hangers-on of the courts. To these occasions of legal conflict were added the myriad suits about land titles and preëmption claims which

gave sustenance to a host of attorneys. Where money came easily it went easily. Sergeant Prentiss, a New England lawyer-orator of the first importance in the cotton kingdom, received a fee of \$50,000 for the conduct of a single case in the Supreme Court of Mississippi; and Reuben Davis became a state-wide hero in the defense of an acknowledged murderer.

As one reviews these elements and forces that entered into the make-up of the lower South in 1850, it becomes plain that this was a region of immense potentiality. Its great waterfalls might run the wheels of many thousand industrial plants, if Southerners ever turned their minds in the direction of manufacturing. Its fertile lands might feed cattle enough to supply the whole national demand for meat. Its harbors were ample for large fleets of ocean-going vessels. The people who had rushed in, dispossessed the native Indians, cleared the lands, became planters, established commonwealths, and sent spokesmen to Congress, were native Americans, with rare exceptions. They were tobacco farmers from the older South, poor whites from all the Atlantic States, Carolina gentlemen, French settlers in Louisiana,

and Scotch-Irish farmers from the mountain districts of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. The German element, which had formed so large a part of the Southern population at the time of the Revolution, could be detected only in proper names here and there and in an occasional *Verein*. Their language, manners, and religion had nearly everywhere given way to the dominant Anglo-Saxon civilization. The lower South was a region of vast opportunity but of wavering democratic faith; it was a region of American traditions, except in its growing devotion to slavery. If its political and social leaders should succeed in uniting all its groups, in moderating its growing ambitions, and in educating its great mass of illiterate people, it must of necessity become one of the greatest sections of the United States and dictate to a large extent the course of national history. Would these conditions be adequately met? Was it possible for the planters to develop the wisest counsels?

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE OF THE COTTON MAGNATES

THE amalgamation of the various elements and forces of the population which composed the cotton States in 1850 was strikingly paralleled by the rapid concentration of economic power in three or four thousand families who lived on the best lands and received three-fourths of the returns from the yearly exports. Two-thirds of the white people of the South had no connection with slavery and received only a very small part of the returns of the community output. A thousand families received over \$50,000,000 a year, while all the remaining 666,000 families received only about \$60,000,000. While these figures do not show such extreme concentration of wealth in a few hands as the facts of our own day disclose, they do nevertheless reveal a dangerous tendency.

Though there was some discontent even in the South at this menace of concentrated wealth, no effort was made to limit the size of men's fortunes.



The tendency was to divide the great numbers of slaves owned by one master into plantation groups of something like a hundred each. A thousand acres of land and a hundred slaves made a unit which was regarded as the most productive; but one man might own ten such units and never be made to bear inheritance or super-taxes. The Hairstons owned as many as 1700 slaves distributed over plantations in Virginia, Alabama, and Mississippi; Howell Cobb of Georgia was pointed out as the master of a thousand negroes; while the Aikens of South Carolina and Joseph Davis (brother of Jefferson Davis) of Mississippi were counted as millionaires.

There was something factitious about the growing wealth of the great masters. The number of slaves owned was believed to be an index of wealth. The greater the number of slaves one owned, the greater one's riches; and the number of slaves increased rapidly, even in the cotton belt. As fortune would have it, the price of cotton tended to rise during the period of 1845 to 1860. This rise in prices added a hundred per cent to the value of land, and it also added nearly a hundred per cent to the value of each slave. A cotton-planter had only to be a kind master and a reasonably good

manager, or employ good overseers, and he could not avoid the rapid accumulation of wealth. He simply grew rich.

The rising price of cotton naturally increased the output of the plantations and gave the owners of slaves a sense of security which they had not known in the older South for fifty years. Between 1850 and 1860 the annual cotton crop increased from 2,500,000 to 5,000,000 bales, and thus more than doubled the wealth of the planters. What exaggerated the situation was the fact that these huge crops did not meet the demands of European and New England mills. Thus every way one turned, the fortunes of the cotton-growers increased and the difficulties of regulating or limiting the evil of slavery increased. Here seems to be an illustration of the saying that prosperity is quite as unfortunate in its effects as poverty.

Every year added to the wealth of him who had and seemed to take away from him who had not. A healthy negro man was worth in 1845 about \$750; in 1860 the same slave, although fifteen years older, was worth in the market a third more, and a young negro man or woman readily sold for \$1500.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, August 8, 1858: "Seven slaves were sold by the sheriff yesterday, without guarantee, at an average of \$1,538."

There was no help for it. Economic laws concentrated the wealth of the South in the cotton region. Owners of slaves, as we have already seen, did not like to sell their servants, but they did sell them under these circumstances, and there was a constant stream of unwilling slave emigration from the tobacco country to the lower South. Cotton proved to be the irresistible magnet. It was doubtless these conditions which moved Lincoln to make his remarkable statement of 1854 that he did not know what to do about slavery: "I surely will not blame them for not doing what I should not know how to do myself. If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do as to the existing institution."<sup>1</sup>

But while the great planters were undoubtedly absorbing a disproportionate part of the wealth of the South, and while economic conditions were daily making more difficult the problem of the statesman who really loved the country, much if not most of this outward wealth found its way out of the cotton region. Leading Southern towns exported annually three or four times as much as they imported. New York, on the other hand, imported twice as much as she exported. Each year

<sup>1</sup> The Peoria Speech of October 4, 1854.

\$100,000,000 worth of foreign goods came into the United States through her custom-house, while only \$50,000,000 worth went out that way. The same thing was true of Philadelphia and Boston. The cotton-planters, with their wide-spread fields and their troops of negro laborers, were buying the bulk of their goods in the North and selling the whole of their output either to Europe or to the North at prices fixed in the world market. The merchants of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia thus reaped enormous profits.

In the realm of finance and banking there was a still stronger limitation upon the concentration of the profits of the cotton industry in the lower South. Men were chiefly interested in supplying their daily necessities from their own plantations, and the only commercial goods which they used were purchased from the North. As a result the planters paid little attention to matters of banking and credit. Although New Orleans was one of the greatest exporting cities in the country, the amount of money on deposit in her banks was insignificant. Less than a third of the returns on the cotton which annually left her docks ever found place in her financial institutions. On the other hand, New York or Philadelphia always had on deposit more money

than the total value of her exports. What was true of New Orleans was true of the cotton belt as a whole. Though the cotton, rice, and sugar of the South sold for \$119,400,000 in 1850, the total bank deposits of the region amounted to only some \$20,000,000. Ten years later, when the value of the crops had increased to more than \$200,000,000, less than \$30,000,000 were deposited in the banks of the cotton and sugar belt.

Nor was it different in the matter of loans or specie or banking capital. While agricultural production was concentrated in the comparatively small area where cotton could be grown and the returns all seemed to be going to the planters, the evidence is conclusive that far the greater part of the proceeds was left in the hands of those who supplied the South with its necessities and its luxuries. The earnings of the slave plantations were thus consumed by tariffs, freights, commissions, and profits which the Southerners had to pay. Southern towns were only marts of trade, not depositories of the crops of surrounding or distant areas. Thus while the planters monopolized the cotton industry, drew to themselves the surplus of slaves, and apparently increased their wealth enormously, they were really but custodians

of these returns, administrators of the wealth of Northern men who really ultimately received the profits of Southern plantations and Southern slavery.

If some planters saw this dangerous tendency and sought frantically to check it, the majority of men were oblivious of it and endeavored to emulate the delusive riches of the great planters. The small farmer, the tenant, and the piney-woods squatter, so well described by Frederick Law Olmsted,<sup>1</sup> all contributed to the power and prestige of the industrial leaders. They produced but little surplus — a bale of cotton, a little fresh beef or pork, poultry, and eggs. This produce they carried on ox-carts or rickety wagons drawn by poverty-stricken horses to the nearest plantation towns and bought in exchange a New England bonnet for the wife, New England shoes for the husband and sons, or a little coffee or molasses for the family table. Although these people rarely became members of the privileged order,<sup>2</sup> they were closely bound to it, tributary in their small way to the great planter aristocracy.

<sup>1</sup> Olmsted, Frederick Law, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, New York, 1856; *A Journey in the Back Country*, New York, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> Hiram G. Runnels of Mississippi, who rose to be Governor in 1836, belonged to this class.

Another class of Southerners contributed in similar manner to the master group. They were the so-called "crackers" or "hill-billies" of northern Georgia and north-central Alabama, and the poorer whites who dwelt on the semibarren lands which the planters refused to cultivate or had worn out by their reckless methods of cultivation. They sometimes owned a few slaves, made a score of bales of cotton, and raised some wheat and corn for the planter market. Their net returns amounted to \$100 or \$200 per year and their homes bore a somewhat better aspect than did the cabins of the piney-woods people. The great majority of Southern whites belonged to these classes. They lived on the poorer lands in the cotton belt — on the hills that border the lower reaches of the Appalachian Mountains or on the sandy ridges of Louisiana and Texas. They were the inarticulate masses. Sometimes, as in the case of Andrew Johnson, twice Governor of Tennessee, or Joseph E. Brown of Georgia, the inveterate enemy of Jefferson Davis during the Civil War, they might rise to power and influence, but the great masses of them could hardly hope to see better days.

Like the piney-woods men, the farmers and tenants of the hills were all dependents of their greater

neighbors, willing hangers-on of a system which, if they but knew it, could give them no promise of better things. The reasons for this dependency were two: many of these ne'er-do-wells were but the distant cousins of the rich, the cast-offs of the fast-growing cotton aristocracy; many others were prospective planters, hopeful that they or their sons might migrate to some new cotton region with a little store of savings, preëempt a tract of government land, buy a slave or two, and set up as planters. It was from such classes in Virginia or the Carolinas that many, if not the majority, of the great cotton-planters had come. The lower South was as yet too big for these farmers and tenants to entertain and nurse the hopeless envy that cankers our own industrial life. They were not altogether contented; but they were far from dangerous. Moreover the planters were a democratic folk in their manners. They were too near the poor in point of time and descent to hold their heads as high as their social prestige might have tempted them to. They endeavored consciously to make and keep friends with their poorer neighbors — for these neighbors had the ballot. They were the “freemen” to whom every returning member of Congress must make his appeal against



Yankee tariffs and Yankee abolitionists; and their votes had made possible the annexation of Texas and the war with Mexico, by which the power and even the riches of the planters had been greatly increased. The lower South was a social unit except for the poor slave, of whom our knowledge comes only through the writings of his master.

The two millions of blacks on whose sturdy shoulders this kingdom of cotton was securely fastened were inexorably bound to the system. Willingly or unwillingly, they increased its solidarity and lent enchantment to the life of the planter. They boasted of the limitless lands of their masters, of the incomparable horses of "ol' massa," of the riches of "ol' massa's" table and the elegancies of "ol' massa's great house." What their inmost thoughts were is not likely ever to be known. \*They certainly produced the greater part of the cotton and sugar of the South; they disliked the whites who did not own slaves; and they were even more cordially disliked by those same whites. And this mutual dislike tended to fasten the bonds of slavery more closely and to prevent any rift between the planters and their less fortunate white brethren by keeping the slaves loyal to their masters and by deterring the poor whites

from sympathizing with any abolitionist movement. \* Every class of Southern society, therefore, was disposed to lend power and influence to the owner of great plantations, save only a bare remnant of mountaineers who were too remote to feel the kinship of the masters or the racial antipathies between lowland whites and blacks.

\* The ancestors of these mountaineers were the pioneers of Revolutionary times who had pressed into the mountains of Alabama, Georgia, and even South Carolina, men of tough fiber and hardy natures, men who bore some of the best colonial names. There in the mountains they had remained. Their ideals were still those of 1776, and their practices were those of social and economic equality. To them the Declaration of Independence was a reality and Thomas Jefferson the greatest man of all history save one. \* They lived in isolated valleys, on the sides of fertile mountains, or on the banks of roaring streams. They spent a great part of their lives in hunting and fishing, and they distilled their corn and fruits into strong liquors just as the western Pennsylvanians had done in the time of Washington. They did not like the great planters; and their leaders in the various legislatures were often courageous opponents

of the plantation system. But they were too few to impede the course of events. They were wayward obstacles in the path of progress, mere annoyances of the great ones of earth. Their cultural isolation was complete.

The roads that led into the mountain districts that these men inhabited were very poor, often mere bridle-paths. The great roadways had left the mountaineers undisturbed, for they connected one river settlement with another. The more important of these roads passed from the older South through Camden and Columbia to Augusta and Savannah, or through Charlotte, Greenville, Atlanta, and Montgomery. A highway known far and wide was that which passed from Louisville through Nashville into Alabama at Huntsville on the Tennessee River, and thence over the mountains to Montgomery and Mobile. A branch of this road set off from Nashville toward Memphis, whence it ran parallel to the Yazoo River, and so on to Natchez. All this Alabama and Mississippi region was, of course, connected with Louisiana and Texas by similar highways which passed through Memphis and Vicksburg. It is therefore clear that all important roads led to the great cotton districts.

This tapping of the cotton belt was also carried on by the railroads which were built during the two or three decades preceding the Civil War. The mother-road of all was the Charleston and Augusta Railway, which was the first to tap the Georgia cotton belt. Another and more important railway was projected from Augusta to Atlanta and thence to western Georgia and Montgomery. An extension of this road was then built to Chattanooga and thence to Memphis, thus binding together the Tennessee valley and the cotton belts of Georgia and South Carolina, with an outlet to the sea at Charleston. Another railway was built from Savannah to Macon, Georgia, and thence to Montgomery, with offshoots into the fertile cotton counties on either side. Thus two systems connected the eastern cotton country with the seaboard. They ran almost parallel, but the crops of cotton were so abundant that they both received ample support.

Two great roads also passed through Mississippi from north to south — one connecting Mobile, Memphis, and Cairo, Illinois, the other connecting New Orleans and Memphis. The cotton belt east of the Tombigbee was closely bound to Charleston and Savannah; the region west of the Tombigbee

was bound by two systems to Mobile and New Orleans. All were better connected with the grain and stock country of the Middle West than with the Middle States and the East. A map of these roads and communications is a map of the cotton belt. The railway, that mighty maker of events, tied together the various planter sections and supplemented the river systems which had given the lower South its start in history. Everything thus tended to make the remote mountaineers dependent on the richer counties, and little was done to open the way for them to enter into the great family of planters.

The same influence and factors tended to bind the older tobacco-growing sections of the South to the masterful cotton communities. The tobacco counties of the three States of North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky contained about one-fourth of the population of those States, but their crops were worth, in 1850, \$10,000,000, and in 1860, \$20,000,000. This was the money-making crop of the region, and a very large portion of it was sold in the lower South. Both master and servant chewed tobacco or "dipped" snuff in excessive quantities. The tobacco was manufactured into "plugs" or "snuff" in Richmond and

Danville and was shipped south in long caravans of covered wagons much resembling the Conestoga wagons of Pennsylvania and the western plains. But as the railroads came into their own just before the outbreak of the Civil War, these overland trains steadily lost their trade.

What they lost, however, in tobacco they gained in whisky, which was distilled in ever-increasing quantities in the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. Loaded with casks and crocks filled with the corn and rye whisky or the peach and apple brandy of the high and remote mountain fastnesses, these wagons gathered in trains as they approached the rich cotton belts. It was an interesting spectacle to see at eventide the lank and wiry forms of the drivers and owners of the so-called tobacco wagons as they built their fires on the outskirts of Southern towns or on the roadside to cook their next day's rations. Their great up-country horses, tethered to fences or the limbs of trees, fed upon oats while their masters ate bread and bacon, drank deeply from their jugs of liquor, and ended each meal with liberal quids of tobacco. These were the nomads of the South, the mediators between the tobacco-growers and the corn and rye whisky producers on the one hand, and the cotton-

growers on the other. In return for the tobacco, the whisky, and even the home-woven cloths of the back country, the cotton men gave raw cotton for the Carolina and Virginia mills which were already rising in the larger towns, as well as coffee and trinkets for the households of the remote districts where people knew of the planters only through the tales of their wagoners and these welcome evidences of their existence.

Another commercial group not much talked of but ever present at sales, on railroad trains, and on steamboats, bound together even more closely the articulate elements of the lower South and the older tobacco States. These slave traders had either offices or agents in every black district of the older South. When a planter died, failed in business, or divided his estate, they plied a profitable trade. And why not? If it were a positive blessing to own slaves, how could it be a sin to buy and sell them? Negroes were bought and sold for the lower Southern market, driven over the long highways to Alabama or Louisiana, and sold for whatever profit there was in the business; but if droves of negroes could be gathered at such places as Norfolk or Louisville, they were stowed safely in the holds of ships and were finally discharged

at the great slave marts of the cotton country. Some of the returns for cotton which might have been placed on deposit in the banks of New Orleans or Mobile thus found their way to Virginia or Kentucky and helped to bind together the interests of planters everywhere.

From Tennessee, Kentucky, and the Northwest, cattle raisers, pork packers, and drovers of mules also turned south for their best markets. Wheat, corn, and oats accompanied the mules and steers upon their journeys, for the lower South did not then produce sufficient grain for home consumption. Consequently the great highways, the railroads, and the steamers all pointed southward, and the north-bound traveler met droves of mules, hogs, or steers going to Charleston, Augusta, or Montgomery. Cotton goods or bags of cotton, sugar, and coffee, and sometimes cloths from Manchester or edged tools from Sheffield, came back in payment. While this trade did not bind the lower South so firmly to the Northwest, it did tend to bind the Northwestern farmers and merchants to the lower South, for the chief, if not the only, market for mules was in the South and it was the plantation negroes who consumed vast quantities of salt meat.



Even the merchants in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston felt in a somewhat similar way the influence of the cotton region. Their shipments to the lower South grew with the increasing crops of cotton, and Eastern banks carried for Southern merchants large deposits with which they were loath to part when the time of reckoning came. This strong economic pull was strengthened by a greater social influence: wealthy young men of the East went to the homes of the planters for their wives, and ambitious young slaveholders in the cotton belt married in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. The best families of the older communities of the North had much Southern blood in their veins, and the first families of the South had quite as much Northern blood in theirs. Henry Wise, an ardent pro-slavery man, had married a Sergeant of Philadelphia; James Chestnut of South Carolina was half Pennsylvanian; Mrs. Jefferson Davis was the granddaughter of a Governor of New Jersey; even the Roosevelts of New York named their children for their Barnwell kin of Charleston. Stephen A. Douglas married a North Carolina heiress who owned a plantation and a hundred slaves in Mississippi. A powerful Senator from Indiana was the owner of a slave

plantation in Kentucky. Every such union added to the power and the sway of the cotton-planters.

So attractive were the profits and the allurements of the wide-spreading cotton fields that thousands of men and women living outside the cotton belt invested in farms or plantations, according to their financial resources.<sup>1</sup> In North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland there were men in almost every county who owned plantations or parts of plantations in the cotton belt. In Lynchburg, Richmond, Norfolk, Washington, and Baltimore there were scores and even hundreds of men who drew their incomes from the cotton fields. If the present easy and flexible corporation system had been developed and applied to cotton-growing before 1850, it is very probable that very much greater sums of eastern capital would have found investment in lands, slaves, and cotton.

Such were the economic forces which were focused in the lower South and which magnified the self-importance of planters when they appeared at Newport or Saratoga. Not only was cotton king in the lower South, but it was fast extending its sway over old States like Virginia and over great

<sup>1</sup> This is a subject which needs investigation by some painstaking student of American social and economic life.

commercial centers like New York. Why might not planters aspire to rule the land and direct the policy of nations beyond the Atlantic? And this was just what they determined to do. Only they would set their own house in order before they invaded other lands.

As the cotton lands showed alarming signs of exhaustion, the planters concerted plans for a more scientific agriculture. The heavy rainfall of the lower South gradually washed the best soils of the uplands into the rivers, and the unending ploughing and harvesting of cotton on the same lands tended to destroy the productive capacity of great areas. Red "gullies" and wide "old fields" covered with broom sedge spoke in emphatic tones of the need of a better system of cultivation.

To remedy the evil of this condition of the land, Edmund Ruffin was employed by South Carolina to teach her planters a better way. In other States rotation of crops, shading of the hard pressed land, conserving of forests and unexhausted soils were the talk of every planters' gathering. Local, state, and sectional societies were organized to check the evil. Men who had said that "no agricultural staple has ever produced so great an effect upon the civilization of the world as cotton," now felt

that if some reform were not effected the decline and fall of the cotton kingdom was as certain as ever had been that of the Roman Empire, the history of which they read with deep interest.

The remedy which they proposed was remarkable, if not revolutionary: the South should enter purposely upon a career of manufacturing.

The planters know that their production of cotton is at a sacrifice which looks to ruinous consequences because the substance of their land is annually wasting away. The remedy which we now insist upon is for the planters to resolve that the cotton mills shall be brought to the cotton fields; that they have been paying toll to the English mill long enough. The cotton fields of the United States, extending from the Atlantic to the Rio Grande, embrace in their wide extent 500,000 square miles. The interest of all planters in this great field is the same. State lines are imaginary when the sacrifice of cotton-growing labor is the question; old issues in politics may rest in forgetfulness; and the whole South may act as one state in giving a prosperous direction and division to the labor of the best-trained, most efficient, and regular force of workers on the face of the globe. But a part of this force must be taken from the soil and put into the mills. Spindles and looms must be brought to the cotton fields. This is the true location of this powerful assistant of the grower.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. D. B. De Bow: *Industrial Resources of the Southern and Western States*, vol. I, p. 229.

If this manufacturing were to be brought to the lower South, negro labor would be used. And this was tried in South Carolina and Georgia with results that were more than ordinarily satisfactory. In 1852 in the Saluda mills at Columbia, 128 slaves and children of slaves were employed to run 5000 spindles and 120 looms. The cost per laborer per annum was only \$75 as against \$116 for the white laborer of the North. Nor was this an isolated experience. By 1860 Southern mills consumed nearly 200,000 bales of cotton per year. Woolen mills were established in Virginia and North Carolina. Eastern capital was already seeking investment in such establishments, and skilled laborers and managers from New England and Europe were waiting to put up machinery. The up-country and piney-woods whites were seen to be valuable as future labor reserves.

Thus the needs of the South, the warning of failing lands, the plentiful supply of cheap labor, and the abounding water-power were about to start the cotton-planters upon a course of conserving their lands, manufacturing their own cotton, and employing profitably thousands of poor whites who had not been accustomed to work more than a few months in the year. If the new movement

should prove successful, it was thought that cities would grow up, that greater markets for live stock would be created, that rotation of crops would become the rule, that soils would be fertilized and preserved, and, what was more important, that the lower South would complete her monopoly — for the planters would have no competition from the cotton of Egypt or India, and they would at the same time keep the manufacturer's profits and all the freight charges for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

With things taking this turn, Southern leaders saw, or thought they saw, manifest destiny beckoning to them in Mexico and Central America. Their institutions were apparently the best in the world, their economic position incomparably the best, and their future beyond the power of man to imagine. Cuba and Mexico were in the hands of weak and backward peoples, and the poor Central American States were in still worse plight. None but selfish Englishmen could wish to stay the hand of conquest in those regions, and all true friends of mankind must wish the guiding hand of Anglo-Saxon slaveholders to be applied to Indian and

<sup>1</sup> It was not so clearly perceived that these Southern interests would become similar to those of the North and that Southern politicians would cease their war upon the protective policy of the industrial States.

half-breed owners of those rich and inviting communities. After the Mexican War and its easy successes, this imperialist ideal captured the imaginations of most of the leaders of the lower South. The more the world demanded cotton, the more the natural increase of the slaves enriched the planters, the more glowing the picture of a future cotton empire appeared.

Thus the trend of events in that great region which extended from Texas to Baltimore and from the Gulf and Atlantic coasts to the Alleghany Mountains, even to St. Louis and Kansas City, seemed to confirm the planter in his industrial monopoly and to strengthen his hold upon his slaves, upon his lands, and even upon the poorer whites. The master of a mansion, a cotton plantation, and a hundred slaves was undoubtedly the social model of the lower South, and he was fast becoming the arbiter of the fortunes of his section, if not of the United States as a whole. Such men and such groups seldom live long without developing a philosophy which is at once their apology and their guide to life.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE COTTON-PLANTER

THE impassable barrier between master and slave and the growing distance between the gentleman of family and the poor white inevitably brought men to the formulation of a doctrine of life peculiar to these conditions. But never in any country was it more difficult than it was in the ante-bellum South for writers to publish or believers to avow a social faith which contradicted the Declaration of Independence; and the farther southwest one went the more difficult, for democracy was too recent a fact and the open profession of personal superiority too offensive.

The discrediting of Jefferson did not begin to take effect in the lower South till such great Virginians as John Randolph and Chief Justice Marshall had successfully ridiculed his teachings as glittering fallacies. Four years after Jefferson's death, the Virginia constitutional convention



openly disavowed the equalitarian teachings which had underlain the politics of the South since 1800; and two years later, when the Nat Turner Insurrection was under discussion in the Virginia Legislature, a young teacher at William and Mary College appeared before the committee on abolition and presented a new system of social science. This man was Thomas R. Dew, a trained political scientist, recently returned from the German universities where he had been taught that the inequality of men was fundamental to all social organization. He argued so forcibly against emancipation of the slaves that men began to say aloud what they had long believed — that Southern society was already sharply stratified and that men might as well avow it.

Dew did not at the beginning attack the older ideals of America. To have done so would have been to alienate men whom he must win. The Jefferson myth was too strong, even in aristocratic Virginia, for men to proclaim their own superiority and keep straight faces. Consequently Dew treated historically the mooted subject of negro slavery. He showed that slavery had been the condition of all ancient culture, that Christianity approved servitude, and that the law of Moses

had both assumed and positively established slavery. If Moses and Paul justified and preached slavery among people of the same race, it was incomparably easier to convince an increasingly orthodox society like that of the South that it could be no sin in white men to hold black men in bondage. How much easier to justify the idea of negro servitude to men who had inherited their slaves from honored ancestors, when it was made plain that the Bible taught that even white servitude was right and proper! It was a time when men, especially Southern men, were studying their classics afresh. The ancient world became a real world to the South in the period of 1850 to 1860. The new philosophy not only found its justification in the writings of the greatest men of antiquity; it fitted the facts of Southern life.

Dew made it perfectly clear that slavery was as profitable to Virginians as all knew it to be to cotton-planters farther south. He insisted that the sale of the surplus supply of slaves brought almost as great a return each year as their greatest crop, tobacco. Thus to the argument of history was added that of economic profit. And here no less a person than the late Governor of Virginia, William B. Giles, came to the aid of philosophy.

Giles had proved from the figures of the custom-houses of Virginia that the returns from negroes shipped South every year were very large.

With the facts of history, the support of Christianity, and the teaching of economics in his favor, it was less difficult for Dew to attack the "fallacies" of Jefferson and the great Declaration. Besides, had not all the greater sons of the Old Dominion recently declared that manhood suffrage, equal representation, and equal rights were inadmissible doctrines? Certainly Marshall, Madison, Randolph, Tazewell, and the rest had both argued and voted against all these things. The public mood was therefore favorable, and the new faith gained a quick and ready hearing.

The new philosophy asserted that men were not equal, but that some men were fit only for the hard toil of the field while others were plainly designed for the easier task of managing and directing the labor of others. There were no natural rights; rights were prescriptive and they implied an equivalent, a service rendered to society. A land-owner might vote; he had a stake in society, and he aided men by adding to the goods that men must have. One who did not own land might or might not vote, according as society directed. A

slave enjoyed the right of protection against violence, hunger, and extreme cold, and in exchange for this protection he gave himself, his work, and his children.

If society were organized on this basis, there would be three classes, with well-defined rank and standing: the highest or the guiding and teaching group; the traders and free laborers and perhaps small land-owners from whom the skilled labor necessary to all groups was to be derived; and the slaves or "mudsills," as they soon came to be called. Professional men — lawyers, physicians, preachers, and teachers — were expected to be recruited from the small farmers and even from the wealthier class. If every man remained in his place and performed the task expected of him, there would be the greatest economy of effort and the highest civilization possible to man. Woman would be the noblest figure of all and she would cast over men the spell of her influence; gentlemen would be chivalrous and knightly, devoting their best thought to the State but always lending a hand to the weak and the humble as the first duty of the strong.

This new teaching might not have succeeded so promptly if men had not already been living for years upon such an understanding of things

without being bold enough to formulate a theory. Because Dew went one step farther and put into writing the facts upon which men had acted, he was hailed as a master. William and Mary College made him its head, and students from the lower South hastened to the old institution to sit at the feet of the new Gamaliel.<sup>1</sup>

The principle of all this teaching was stated thus by President Dew: "The exclusive owners of property ever have been, ever will and perhaps ever ought to be the virtual rulers of mankind. . . . It is the order of nature and of God that the being of superior faculties and knowledge, and therefore of superior power, should control and dispose of those who are inferior. It is as much in the order of nature that men should enslave each other as that other animals should prey upon each other." But Dew probably did not intend to put the case so harshly as it appears in the last sentence.

It remained for Chancellor William Harper of the Supreme Court of South Carolina to advance the doctrine to its extreme form. The South Carolinian

<sup>1</sup> Dew's philosophy first appeared in Richmond in May, 1832, in pamphlet form. But his ideas were reprinted in the newspapers in all parts of the South and his pamphlet was reprinted many times before 1860. It is most available now in *The Pro-Slavery Argument*, Charleston, 1852.

rejoiced in the "able statement" of the case by the Virginian and he endeavored to elaborate the new philosophy where it seemed necessary to the upbuilding of a perfect state. Harper's work, which first appeared in 1838 under the title of *A Memoir on Slavery*, was less historical but more to the point than that of Dew. The Bible and the ancient philosophers were of course the great witnesses.

Harper conceived of slavery as the natural order: "To constitute a society a variety of offices must be discharged, from those requiring the very lowest degree of intellectual power to those requiring the very highest. It should seem that the endowments ought to be apportioned according to the exigencies of the situation. And the first want of society is leaders. The first care of a state which regards its own safety, prosperity, and honor should be that when minds of extraordinary power appear, to whatever department of knowledge, art, or science their exertions may be directed, the means should be provided of their most consummate cultivation." But to others such careful training could have no significance. "Odium has been cast upon our legislation on account of its forbidding the elements of education to be

communicated to slaves. But, in truth, what injury is done to them by this? He who works during the day with his hands does not read in the intervals of leisure for his amusement or the improvement of his mind. If there were any chance of their elevating their rank and condition in society, it might be a matter of hardship that they should be denied those rudiments of knowledge which open the way to further attainments."

Not only does Harper hold that the lowest class in society is to be trained to only the hardest toil, but he also believes that its members are necessarily on a low moral plane: "A slave has no hope that by a course of integrity, he can materially elevate his condition in society, nor can his offense against honesty materially depress it, or affect his means of support or that of his family. Compared to the freemen he has no character to establish or lose." It is not different in the relations of the sexes and for the same reason: "In northern communities the unmarried woman who becomes a mother is an outcast from society. She has given birth to a human being who is commonly educated to a course of vice, depravity, and crime. It is not so with the female slave. She is not a less useful member of society than before. She has not

impaired her means of support nor materially impaired her character or lowered her station; she has done no great injury to herself or any other human being. Her offspring is not a burden but an acquisition to her owner. The want of chastity among slaves hardly deserves a harsher name than weakness."

The chasm between this lowest class of society and the masters and leaders who are at the top is so great that none can bridge it. There is, to be sure, a free or intermediate class from which the truly noble are recruited and from which is derived the connecting link between the field hand and the gentleman. Men of this group are to fill the places of mechanics, merchants, engineers, physicians, teachers, lawyers, preachers, and overseers. They should be educated at the expense of society, should have the right to vote and to bear arms, and should be made to feel the pride of race and color and to appreciate the benefits of a caste system. And thus Chancellor Harper comes, like President Dew, to repudiate the doctrine of the great Virginia statesman and philosopher: "Is it not palpably nearer the truth to say that no man was ever born free and that no two men were ever born equal, than to say that all men are born free and



equal? . . . Man is born to subjection. . . . The proclivity of the natural man is to domineer or to be subservient." It is through the evolution of men in society that each man or class of men comes to find the proper place and level, and society then crystallizes and legalizes the resulting differences. This is the very condition of the development of civilization. Laws are made to prevent outbreaks against this established order as well as to render the different classes contented and even ignorant—for "if there are sordid, servile, and laborious offices to be performed, is it not better that there should be sordid, servile, and laborious beings to perform them?"

But there will inevitably be resentment and insurrection: foreigners will foment troubles, natives will be restless, and slaves may rise, in spite of the fact that slavery tends to decrease friction more and more as population becomes denser and the hope of liberation from a given state of society is definitely abandoned. To meet all contingencies, standing armies must be created and maintained. In the South such a course would be easy because the honor of defending one's country would be allowed only to white men, slaves being possible material only in dire necessity. In the South,

“like ancient Athens, it will be necessary that every citizen should be a soldier. . . . And perhaps a wise foresight should induce our state to provide that it should have within itself such military knowledge and skill as may be sufficient to organize, discipline, and command armies, by establishing a military academy or school of discipline.”<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly necessary to develop farther the ideas of Dew and Harper. They prepared their premises carefully and boldly. They did not speak the language of the politician, but they spoke rather as wise men giving their fellows those fundamental propositions from which practical leaders might make what deductions exigencies required. Certainly the South would no longer profess devotion to the notions of freedom and equality if these teachings should find acceptance.

Acceptance, indeed, these teachings readily found. In 1837 Calhoun, the greatest and sincerest of all Southern leaders, openly announced that he held slavery to be a positive good and that

<sup>1</sup> Harper's philosophy may be found in *The Pro-Slavery Argument* already cited. I have not given page and line, because I have had to make many extracts and condense them. The reader who would understand this philosophy in its minor details as well as in outline would do well to read the works of Dew and Harper.

Southerners should no longer apologize for it: "I hold slavery to be a good; . . . moreover, there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not in point of fact live on the labor of the other."<sup>1</sup> This statement might have been taken at one time as a peevish thrust on the part of Calhoun at the captains of industry who were getting the better of him in national legislation. But in 1837 Calhoun, like so many other Southerners of the old Jeffersonian democracy, had changed his mind; he meant what he said; he believed in the caste system of which in the South slavery was the mainstay. In his view nothing could be more unfounded and false than the opinion that all men are born free and equal; inequality was indispensable to progress; government was not the result of compact, nor was it safe to entrust the suffrage to all.<sup>2</sup>

These are the views to which the people of the lower South were being converted. The adoption of this point of view marks a revolution in Southern thought quite as remarkable as the revolution which took place in German thought under the

<sup>1</sup> Richard K. Crallé: *The Works of John C. Calhoun, 1853-1856*, vol. II, p. 630.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 8, 12, 46-58.

leadership of Bismarck during the second half of the nineteenth century. In the lower South the influence of Calhoun was very great; but even that influence could not have availed had it not been for the difficult and apparently insoluble problem of negro slavery. After Calhoun became the advocate of caste and inequality, it was not difficult for others of lesser note to follow his lead or for the great majority of the planters to accept the new faith. Still, if the lower South were to present a solid front, all the professional men and the upper middle class must also yield their belief and accept as final the idea that society must be divided into sharply defined ranks, and that some men must be the burden bearers for the rest and labor all their lives without the hope of improvement or more compensation than their food and shelter. If we examine the writings of some of the other spokesmen of the South, both lower and upper, we shall see how far this revolution of thought went.

In South Carolina nearly every leader, whether in politics, religion, or education, upheld slavery and endeavored to reply in positive terms to all who condemned the system. Macaulay, Dickens, Mrs. Trollope, and Harriet Martineau were answered with the statement that modern

industrialism was worse than slavery. James H. Hammond, one of the moderate and very popular followers of Calhoun, published a series of letters in 1845 in which he attacked England and New England for the cruelties of their industrial system. As no reply was made to the heart-rending picture which he drew, the lower South took great consolation in the belief that their caste system was not as heartless as that of their opponents. Southerners, they said, did take care of the children of slaves; they did employ physicians for their sick or aged dependents; and they did maintain a sort of comradeship with their slaves which blunted the keen edge of servitude.

From this point the advance was easy to the position already taken by Dew that the negroes were the happiest of mankind, because relieved of all care for themselves and their offspring. Hammond urged that "our patriarchal scheme awakens the higher and finer feelings of our nature. It is not wanting in its enthusiasm and its poetry." William Gilmore Simms of South Carolina, author of as many books as Scott himself, lent all the weight of his name to the thesis that slaves were the happiest of laborers. William L. Yancey of Alabama made the Southern social system the

theme of his marvelous oratory. Henry S. Foote, Jefferson Davis, John Slidell, and every other public man of the lower South became ardent advocates of the newer faith. Before 1850 the older Jeffersonian ideal was totally abandoned, and the contrary ideal of the inequality of men had been adopted.

To men whose interests were those of masters of slaves and whose philosophy was the doctrine of social caste and prescriptive rights, it was but natural that Walter Scott's famous novels should make appeal. One New York publisher said he sent Scott's works South in carload lots. The *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and the *Lady of the Lake* stirred Southern men to think of themselves as proud knights ready to do or die for some romantic ideal; and the long list of novels from *Waverley* to *The Fair Maid of Perth* seemed to reflect anew the old ideals of fine lords and fair ladies whom Southerners now set themselves to imitate. Scott's gentlefolk always talked and acted in lofty fashion; the poor and the ill-placed were rough and brutal, without finer feeling, and ready to accept the kicks and cuffs of their betters; and the money-getter was always the sharp and unlovely creature who suggested the Yankee pedler or crafty financier.

Before 1850 it was good form for Southern gentlemen to place Sir Walter Scott's novels on their library shelves and for all Southern boys and girls to read these books as the great models of life and good breeding. Few men ever had a greater influence over the cotton-planters than the beloved Scottish bard and novelist.

But while Scott was enthroned in every library, the sturdier Scotsman, Thomas Carlyle, also knocked at the door of Southern intellect. Carlyle went roughly to his point. "Would you turn out slaves, like horses, to graze?" Then why talk of abolition? "Every man is created to work, some at menial tasks, some at higher callings and others, as God-given heroes, to lead mankind." In scores of books and essays the grim old teacher laid out his doctrine of social subordination and class distinction. That was all that Dew and Harper and Calhoun and Hammond desired. The greatest realist in England had weighed their system and found it just and humane. It is astonishing how greatly Carlyle influenced the world. A few years later he was one of the prophets in Prussia, and his *Frederick the Great*, the first volumes of which appeared in 1858, made capital for the Hohenzollern as well as for every other imperialist the world over.

In the South George Fitzhugh took up the idea of strong-arm government, definitely acknowledging his indebtedness to Carlyle, and presented to the country a book which was designed to round out all that had gone before. In *Sociology for the South*<sup>1</sup> he laid down a plan for his section of the country which he expected to see adopted elsewhere if it proved successful. After restating the caste system of Dew and his successors, he attacked Adam Smith with ridicule and relentless logic. Society, he maintained, must be organized for positive, not negative, purposes. Men must be restrained, governed, subjected to discipline; and states must take care that every man, woman, and child shall have a vocation and useful employment with due support. The idle must be compelled to work — only people must not confuse with idleness that leisurely thinking which is the work of philosophers. In such a state, freedom of movement, of trade, or of industry is not possible; social efficiency and economic success in a world of reality demand organization.

But organization connotes slavery for the ignorant and the poor. In England, the duty of the state is to subordinate the owners of the mills to

<sup>1</sup> Published in Richmond, 1854.



the Government, and the Government should find them employees. The workers should be made slaves of the industrial lords and compelled to labor. They should be forbidden freedom of movement and should be attached to their masters, who in turn must be compelled to give them support and kindly treatment. Children should be reared at the expense of the industry. Strife and poverty must disappear. The same program should be adopted in New England and in the West. Instead of the Federal Government giving away lands or selling them in small tracts, great tracts should be granted to responsible men, who should be allowed to entail these at death upon their oldest sons. The landless and the idle of the Eastern States should be attached to these plantations and become the tenants of their masters for life.

“Slavery will everywhere be abolished or everywhere be reinstated” was the alternative presented by Fitzhugh. He expected that slavery would be everywhere reinstated and that all the world would become like the South, except that the South would have the happy advantage of making all white men free and of leaving the drudgery to negro slaves who were especially created for the purpose. With

such a system, Southerners would be the happiest as well as the most favored people under Heaven. In the South all white men would be educated at public expense and the best of them would become philosophers and litterateurs, like their prototypes in ancient Athens. Women would become, where they were not already so, the queens of earth. There would be no Miss Martineaus, no Madame de Staëls, but womanly women whom men would adore, and knightly men to whom women would cling like vines to sturdy oaks. To be a Southerner would be a distinction.

With this ideal state duly propped and bolstered with laws of primogeniture and entail, and protected against free trade and foolish ideas from without, it would be impossible for other nations to compete. White men would run away from the North just as negroes ran away from the South, in order to join the new régime and to enjoy the freedom and blessings of the most intelligent and beneficent social order that the world had ever known.

In this new civilization Christianity should become the one and only religion. Slavery and Christianity were mutual supports and mutual guarantees. Under their influence property would bear

all the burdens of society and its owners would receive all the honors. There would thus be no poverty and little crime because the chief motive to crime is poverty. Few men would ever become insane because every man's task would be congenial and the free open-air life would be healthful. If this system were left alone, there would be no commotions and no wars; and over and above all God would preside, and order would rule without a flaw or a slip.

While this book did not command the immediate attention that similar books in modern Germany have received, it was accepted by the newspapers as pointing the way to the future. In the most serious reviews it was treated as a great and profound work. If criticism was offered, it was always in the way of improvement and elaboration. An enlarged if not improved edition was brought out two years later under the title of *Cannibals All; or, Slaves without Masters*. Fitzhugh became an influential publicist, corresponded with Carlyle, gave lectures in the East, and set forth his doctrines till the thunder of the guns at Fort Sumter announced that the argument was closed.

This social philosophy, elaborated and constantly reprinted in newspapers or pamphlets,

represented fairly what the articulate South was ready to go to war for. There was, however, some protest. The editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* insisted in the beginning that Dew's ideal society was by no means ideal to him; it was not until 1843 that he became a convert to the new faith. In North Carolina slavery had never won such complete ascendancy as it had in the lower South; and there opposition to the accepted dogma was strenuously voiced till hushed by law or by a too powerful public opinion. In 1846 Daniel R. Goodlow, in a pamphlet of real acumen, urged that slavery was not a perfect institution. He insisted that the investment of some billions of capital in the ownership of labor was a doubtful speculation. The land would be worth as much if the negroes were free, and the capital invested in slaves might better be put into improvements.

A less effective protest was voiced by Hinton R. Helper, in 1857, in the *Impending Crisis of the South*, a book which became a campaign document in the North three years later. Helper endeavored to show that the planters composed a far-reaching oligarchy, if not conspiracy, against the poorer farmers and the landless classes. His statistics were well calculated to prove further that this

conspiracy had been the sole cause of the economic backwardness of the South. But Southerners did not suffer his book to be read. A hapless agent who endeavored to circulate it was quickly haled to court. Neither Goodlow's argument nor Helper's outcry had any appreciable effect in stemming the tide of pro-slavery teaching. Not one man in a hundred even heard of them. Nor was the moderate reasoning of George M. Weston's *The Progress of Slavery in the United States* (1857) effective. Even if men in their reflective moments were inclined to agree with him, the aristocratic and feudal evolution had gone too far.

During the twenty-five years which had elapsed since Virginia had declined definitely the task of abolishing slavery and since Dew had offered his convincing argument, the cotton-planters as well as the sugar and tobacco growers had definitely and finally broken with the Jeffersonian ideal. Their growing economic power and the attractiveness of their labor system had confirmed them in their view that government must needs represent property and privilege and that democracy was a failure. Since the planters were the articulate element in society and the small farmers and landless groups were hardly in a position to assert any

contrary views, it was not difficult to make the lower South socially solid. No newspaper of any importance, no college or university professor, no prominent preacher, and no politician of any party offered effective resistance. In two or three instances professors did go so far as to support mildly anti-slavery views, but they were removed from their positions. One eminent man in Charleston stood alone and was left free, apparently because any attempt to curb him might advertise his moderate ideas. The mails were closed against abolition books and newspapers as a matter of course; and boycotts were urged against Northern periodicals if they printed articles that displeased the South. There was the most perfect agreement ever known in Anglo-Saxon history. Men thought the ideal social organization had been found. Were not the planters prosperous, the middle-class and landless groups contented, and the slaves the happiest of living men?

## CHAPTER IV

### LIFE AND LITERATURE IN THE LOWER SOUTH

THE home of the cotton-planter was a modest country house of ten or twelve rooms. It stood upon an elevation along the roadside or upon a river bluff, surrounded by half a dozen or more negro cabins known as the "quarters." There were tall, spreading trees, graveled walks, shrubs, and, in the grounds of the greater places, marble figures of wild animals or replicas of antique statues. The house itself was likely to be surrounded by long porches which gave protection against the intense heat of summer but which darkened the halls and rooms of the mansion. These porches were often as tall as the house itself and their roofs were upheld by rows of huge white columns, which gave even a second rate or "tumble-down" place a grandeur that was supposed to impress the visitor and proclaim the dignity of the master and the size of his estate.

Inside the house there was a wide hall and an ample stairway leading to another hall on the second floor. From the hall on the first floor one entered the parlors, the library, and the dining-room; on the second floor were the living-rooms of the family. Ceilings were high everywhere, and windows tall and wide; but carpets were of plain design, when there were carpets at all. On the walls there were portraits of worshipful ancestors, a steel engraving of George Washington, a battle scene of the Revolution, and a painting of Calhoun or Clay addressing the United States Senate. Furniture was as a rule plain but somewhat massive. Of servants there were always plenty and to spare, for the number of servants rather than the elegance of the outfit advertised the wealth and dignity of the family.

A half-score of sons and daughters, a tall, lank, and rather weatherworn gentleman, and a slender, soft-voiced, weary-looking mother composed the family group, unless one counts the inevitable guest or old-maiden cousin who, like the furniture or the servants, always formed part of a planter's household. Though it was not good form to labor with one's own hands, yet both master and mistress knew how to perform most of the work that was



daily done by the blacks. The younger members of the family took pride in their immunity from the work that is the lot of most men. Soft hands and ignorance of the vocabulary of labor and trade were considered especially becoming. Nor was the toil of the fields or drudgery of the house more attractive then and there than now and here. The injunction of Holy Writ to "multiply and replenish the earth" was obeyed; but the truth that "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground" made little appeal, for was not the negro created by God to do the work of the white man? His skin was black and proof against the heat of summer; he delighted in the streaming rays of torrid suns; and he preferred to sleep at noonday with his face to the sky. Negro women made beds, cleaned houses, and cooked the meals of the planters, while negro boys and girls served them at table in the great dining-room. Horses were groomed and harnessed, cows were fed and milked, and morning fires were made by negro hands. If one wanted a glass of water, a servant was ready to bring it fresh from the well; if flies disturbed the guest, and flies always disturbed everybody, there were boys to fan them away and to keep the atmosphere in motion.

In return for personal service the negroes were supplied with cabins — one for each family. These cabins were built of logs, the crevices daubed with clay, and the roofs made of clapboards or shingles. There was one broad fireplace at which meals were cooked and served and clothes were washed, and around which the little negroes gathered when the weather was cold or rainy. There were beds and mats and quilts for sleeping accommodations. Some slept on the beds, some on the floor with their feet to the fireplace, and some in the attic. There was no waste space in a negro cabin.

The slaves raised pigs and chickens, and had gardens in which they grew sweet potatoes for themselves and, in the upper South, tobacco plants in the fence corners about the “quarters.” Every week the master allowed each grown person four pounds of meat, a peck of meal, and a quart of molasses, with something over for the little ones. The rest the slave was expected to find for himself — the Sunday chicken, the “greens” from the garden, and the potatoes from the cache in which they were stored away from the cold. The older slaves were allowed to keep dogs and to hunt coons and ’possums at night and, now and then, squirrels and rabbits by day. The negro is even now the

inveterate enemy of the rabbit. Little negroes played and romped in the "quarters," in the barns, and even in the great house; they climbed the tallest trees, and they put their black faces out of every window of the cabins when visitors were around. Their clothing was like the annals of the poor, short and simple, merely a shirt which reached to the knees. Shoes and hats were useless encumbrances for pickaninnies in winter as well as in summer. Older negroes received a new suit of clothes, two pairs of shoes, and a cheap hat each year, and at Christmas time a little liquor, some trinkets for the women, and a small sum of spending money. Masters and servants lived much together on the smaller plantations, and white and black children played together whether on great places or small.

It was a community life. Each member felt closer to the others than is now generally supposed. When the old master or the old mistress died, there was genuine sorrow in the "quarters" and a long train of black mourners followed the remains to the grave, for the break-up of plantations was as distressing to slaves as to their owners. When slaves died, their remains, neatly dressed, were laid away in plain coffins in the "God's acre"

of the plantation. The death of a slave was lamented as much in the mansion as in the "quarters," and every attention was given the sick. Indeed the oversight of the health of the slaves, always ignorant and sometimes reckless, was a burden of life which the mistress seldom evaded. Family physicians attended negroes as well as masters; and on great estates there were chaplains to bury the dead, to officiate in plantation chapels, and to ask blessings at the planter's table. But the white chaplain was not popular with the negroes. They preferred to sit in the galleries or annexes of the white churches or to worship under the guidance of their own preachers where white people did not intrude, and where they could, under such auspices, indulge without restraint in weird chants, bodily contortions, and loud shrieks.

If the master was niggardly in the matter of dress for his slaves, he was also rather indifferent about his own clothes. It had long been a mark of distinction in a gentleman of Virginia to dress in shabby or last year's suits; and what was good form in the Old Dominion was good form in the cotton country. Nor were the women fastidious. Elegant silks and gay bonnets then, as always, delighted their hearts, but the tyranny of seasons

and of fashions did not rule the plantations. In Washington, however, where Southerners were always on dress parade, at Saratoga, or at the Virginia springs, planters' wives followed the Parisian styles, wore costly jewels, and drove handsome equipages. There the absentee mistress of even a small number of slaves was at her social best, and her dinners, her salons, her balls were "the rage." One thinks here of Mrs. Stephen A. Douglas, Mrs. Jefferson Davis, and Mrs. William Gwin, the wife of Senator Gwin of California.

In Charleston, Mobile, and New Orleans men of business, lawyers who owned country estates, and merchants whose names were known in New York and Boston, were more careful to maintain the fashion and dressed more like the Prince of Wales than was the custom on the plantations. After all, the democracy of Jefferson was waning, and in these centers the women generally dressed, much as they do today, to display the riches of their husbands; they were living advertisements of the family standing. To drive at six o'clock upon the Battery, to dance at twelve o'clock at St. Cecilia's, and to have a pew at St. Michael's were evidences of success that none could have misunderstood.

Travel was a part of every Southern planter's

life. Before the day of railroads the family carriage was an institution. Large, cumbersome, swung high on suspension springs, it rocked and rolled along the rough roads of the lower South with all the dignity of a limousine and with much more picturesqueness. It was trimmed with brass and gold and usually had the family coat of arms adorning the doors. There were light metal steps on which the ladies mounted and which were pulled in when the door closed, leaving the uninitiated wondering how the precious freight was loaded on or off. The horses were groomed and harnessed in the best of style, and high upon the box sat a majestic son of Africa, the happiest product of the plantation system. Such an outfit one might see any day upon a lonely country road making its way for miles or hundreds of miles to visit neighbors or kindred in distant States.

Sometimes these Southern gentlefolk were on their way to New Orleans or Charleston to see the races. In summer they were likely to be seeking the way to Pass Christian for the Gulf bathing beaches or else they wandered farther away to the mountains of North Carolina, in order perchance that the planter might take part in a caucus of South Carolina politicians. But wherever they

went they stayed weeks or months to get the worth of their long journey. To travel all the way from Alabama to Old Virginia was no small undertaking even to the tough and wiry frames of our antebellum planters and there was therefore much necessary hospitality on the way. If one may believe some of the contemporary accounts, however, there was often a good deal of querying and wagging of heads when the outriders, the drivers, and the horses, not to mention the gentlemen and ladies who clambered out of these overland arks, all settled down at a distant cousin's for a month's sojourn.

Still, all was not plantation routine, dress, and travel. In the great house there was a library which was likely to be the home of law books, of histories, of English novels, and of handsomely bound Greek and Latin classics. There were quarterly reviews on the library tables; and a file of the *Charleston Mercury*, the *New Orleans Picayune*, or the *Richmond Enquirer* stood on the lower shelves of the bookcases. The debates in Congress were read everywhere, for Congress was the arena in which great Southerners displayed their talents and endeavored to thwart their rivals

and opponents from the North. The most sacred of all public documents was the Constitution of the United States, which many could repeat verbatim from start to finish. But South Carolinians alone felt the necessity and the duty of remembering two constitutions at all times and upon all occasions.

The Virginia Bill of Rights, the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, and Madison's Report of 1799 were only a little less sacred to *emigrés* of the Old Dominion in the lower South. Of course, New England periodicals gave place to the *Southern Review*, published in the sacred Carolina city, to *De Bow's Review* of New Orleans, and especially to the *Southern Literary Messenger*, which always brought with it something of the atmosphere of Richmond and was hardly less dear to the Southern heart than Charleston itself. But while the *North American Review* and the *Knickerbocker Magazine* seldom gained a place on Southern tables, *Harper's Magazine* and, just before the war, *Harper's Weekly* found many readers in the South.

While law and propaganda held large places in the thought of the lower South, there was time and interest left for the lighter literature which so many men have regarded as a test of culture —



*belles-lettres*, as the people of 1850 were prone to say. Walter Scott's romanticism and hero-worship suited their taste and braced their social system, as we have already seen, and he furnished matter enough for the longest of the idle days of a lonely cotton plantation. *Marmion* and *Ivanhoe* and the *Heart of Midlothian* were common intellectual property in all parts of the South. Yet Byron with his reckless love of the lawless and, later, Thackeray with his quiet but effective irony won the hearts of readers. In fact, every English writer of standing made an appeal to the planters so long as he did not attack their beloved institution of slavery. The planters were consciously returning to a former allegiance. It was the English, not the budding New England, literature which won them, although Charles Dickens with his tearful stories was too much for Southern digestion; and on his Southern tour in 1859 this great author fortunately did not pass beyond Richmond.

If ladies and gentlemen of the cotton kingdom liked to read the better English writers, they also readily turned to the older classics. Doctor Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith and, above all, Shakespeare were found upon every shelf and were read and reread for their content as well as for their

form and style. The plays of Shakespeare were presented in Charleston long before they found a hearing in Boston and Philadelphia; and Richmond, Mobile, New Orleans, and Memphis readily furnished large audiences for the greater English playwrights even before those cities became populous. Planters who had been educated at the University of Virginia or who had traveled in Europe took up their winter residence in the nearest cities, in order to enjoy the art of the elder Booth, who made his American début in Petersburg in 1821, or to hear the *Barber of Seville*, given in New Orleans every winter, or to sit in Charleston for portraits by the painters De Veaux and Fraser. Although New Orleans was the first city in America to give serious attention to opera and always maintained close ties with Paris, Southerners did not develop their love for music, painting, or sculpture beyond the level of the amateur.

Aside from portraits which they liked to have made for their ancestral halls, some promising efforts at sculpture, which made a beginning in Richmond before 1860, and the mere pleasure of hearing good music, the planter's taste for the fine arts made little progress. His life did not lend itself to that form of expression. To be sure,

Gottschalk was born in New Orleans, and there was an Academy of Design in Charleston; but the former never counted America his musical home, and the Academy had only a fitful existence.

From Thomas Jefferson, who enjoyed his Homer to the last year of his long and busy life, to the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Palmer of New Orleans, planters of both the tobacco and the cotton-growing regions held firmly to the old idea that a liberal education could not possibly be based upon any other foundation than the languages and literatures of the ancients. Perhaps they received this idea from their European ancestors; or, like Goethe in his old age, they may have rediscovered Rome and Greece. Whatever the cause of their early liking for the classics, the preachers of early Presbyterianism, missionaries trained in the methods and the theology of Princeton, carried Latin and Greek wherever they went. They prayed in English but kept their Greek grammars in their pockets, and every aspirant for education or leadership in the Southern backwoods was set to work on Latin forms and Greek roots. In a hundred log "colleges" during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, Southern youths labored over their classics from sun to sun, like the slaves in the fields.

Calhoun, McDuffie, and scores of other well-known leaders, were the product of these schools. Both preachers and politicians made long quotations from Virgil and Homer and Horace to prove their education and to practise their learning. Young men wrestled with pronunciation and old men spent their spare hours in the shade of friendly oaks mastering the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle in the original. At social gatherings and at even graver meetings men wrangled about the correct renderings of passages from their favorite authors.

In such an atmosphere as this it is not surprising that the colleges of the lower South long remained essentially schools of Greek and Latin. Yet men could not write popular books or political harangues in the languages of Homer and Cicero, even though they did assign ancient names to thousands of their political pamphlets. The challenge of Irving and Cooper and Hawthorne was constantly before them, and even the most loyal of the classicists felt this new pull away from their toilsome pages. Aside from the serious reviews already mentioned and the excellent literary pages of the better daily and weekly papers, Southerners felt that they must produce fruits worthy of their

civilization if they would stand unabashed in the presence of the rest of mankind.

The greatest and best of the cotton-planter poets and novelists was William Gilmore Simms of Charleston (1806–1870), who at the age of twenty published his *Lyrical and Other Poems*. This volume, however, fell flat from the press and found no response from the severely classical gentlemen of Charleston who measured everything by the standard of “Mr. Pope” or “Mr. Dryden.” Simms tried again and yet again — a score of times — till more than twenty volumes of verse came from his pen. Though he imitated the vein now of Scott, now of Byron, he somehow failed to attract the planters. Then Simms tried the writing of novels, and in 1834 he published *Guy Rivers*, which yielded him a small bank account. The next year he brought out two other works, *The Yemassee* and the *Partisan*, each of which passed rapidly through two or three editions and made his name known in London better than in the lower South. Although the planters felt the need of a native literature and even organized clubs for its encouragement, they did not read enough contemporary books to recognize the merit of one of their own writers when he appeared.

Simms himself, though perhaps the only Southerner in all ante-bellum history who could say so, complained that the fact that he earned his living by his pen prevented his recognition in the best Carolina circles. It was a curious contradiction in the planter life; but Simms continued his efforts to give the South a native literature until he was the author of nearly a hundred volumes and until he was recognized in both North and South as a great writer. To be sure, his romances reminded one of Cooper and even of Scott; still, the subjects were Southern, and many of his characters were original and charming and one or two were unsurpassed. When the great war came he was living in style at his country place, a great library around him and guests always at his table. What more could one ask?

Of less importance but distinctly a planter in character was John Pendleton Kennedy (1795-1870) whose *Swallow Barn* (1832) and *Horseshoe Robinson* (1835) portrayed planter life and Carolina ideals in ways that gave their author as much recognition as could be afforded by men who were very busy with their negroes and their politics. Although the writings and the methods of Kennedy are remarkably similar to those of Irving,

there was enough originality in these works to entitle them to much more attention than they now receive. The pictures of country life, of the 'squire of the county court, of the mistress of a plantation, and of great neighborhood dinners are delightful and bear more than a single reading. So well was his talent recognized in England, we are told, that Thackeray asked Kennedy to write the fourth chapter of his famous *Virginians* and tradition has it that the request was complied with.

Good though the work of Simms and Kennedy was, the best of the planter South was found in its poetry. Aside from minor lawyer-poets and the miraculous *My Life is Like the Summer*, of Richard Henry Wilde, the lower South produced two men of genius — Timrod and Hayne, who were inspired and trained by Simms in Charleston, although it took the disasters of the Civil War to bring out their greatness.

Troubled all his life by poverty, lonely beyond the fate of most mortals, and stricken for many years with tuberculosis, Henry Timrod (1829–1867) hastened to his grave without having done half his work. His *Cotton Boll*, *The Lily Confidante*, and *Vision of Poesy* show the artist of more than mere talent. But the times were out of joint and

when peace came he was exhausted. His equal was never produced in the lower South.

Although his friend Paul Hamilton Hayne (1830-1886) wrote more and had the satisfaction of seeing his works more frequently in bound volumes, he was hardly the equal of the author of *The Cotton Boll*. Hayne published three volumes before 1860, and he lived to bring out in Philadelphia and New York still other volumes after the great struggle was over. Because in all these works he speaks as a Southerner he ultimately won from English critics the title "Laureate of the South." But the great planter régime never quite recognized him, nor were his royalties drawn from their purses. Like Simms, he clung resolutely to his section and defended its cause and ideals to his dying hour. But he defended them in a lonely cottage in Georgia where he spent the last twenty years of his life earning his livelihood in the "sweat of his brow," seeking still to give aid now and then from his slender stores to his more unfortunate friends, Timrod and Simms.

But Simms, Timrod, and Hayne were after all only echoes of that greater world of literature of which Scott, Byron, and Dickens were the masters, and they belonged by tradition to English



literature. There was a more original and therefore more important group of writers who lived in the lower South and who finished their work before the war began. The chief of these were the Rev. Augustus Baldwin Longstreet (1790-1870), William Tappan Thompson (1812-1882), Johnson Jones Hooper (1815-1863), and Joseph G. Baldwin (1815-1864). In 1834 Longstreet published, in sportive mood, his *Georgia Scenes*, in which he portrayed the homely life and fun of the poorer white people of the lower South.

Longstreet made the fisticuffs, the cock-fights, and the horse-swappings of county court days the subjects of his writing, and few have equaled him in his chosen field. His neighbor and partner in the management of a rural newspaper, William Tappan Thompson, published in 1840 *Major Jones's Courtship*, which continued the same kind of work. This book won immediate success, and its homely scenes the simpler folk in all parts of the South still remember. Of less importance but well worth reading is Johnson Hooper of Alabama. Hooper made the rascally, trifling fellow who swindled his neighbors or ran away from his family his special favorite, and *Simon Suggs* is his best creation.

Of a higher order was the work of Joseph G. Baldwin, also of Alabama, who made Virginia his especial field in a series of articles which he published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*. That Baldwin had read Irving is perfectly plain; but his treatment of Virginia subjects and characters is so original and mirth-provoking that few can read his pages today without enjoyment. It was a sort of second Knickerbocker's tales which he finally gathered together and published under the title of *Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi* (1853). It was not so much character-sketches as humorous description which Baldwin presented.

In this group of writers one sees today the predecessors of Mark Twain — whose parents, in fact, came from this very region. The grotesque and the absurd are here the special veins of men who seek not to teach men anything nor to show that the South could produce a literature. What they saw and heard in their daily intercourse with common men they endeavored to reproduce in book form. A half a century later Mark Twain and Bret Harte, doubtless familiar with their works and living among people essentially similar, followed up their methods and won international repute.

After all, the life of the plain people of the lower South is more important than that which displayed itself in the great houses, at the races, or at the resorts. This life was not altogether so crude and raw as Longstreet depicted it, nor was it so much out of sympathy with the planter ideal as Frederick Law Olmsted represented in his *Seaboard Slave States* (1856) and *Journey in the Back Country* (1860).

The farmers and the tenants, the piney-woods people and the mountaineers were like farmers and tenants elsewhere. The larger number of them lived in fairly comfortable log or frame houses of one or two rooms. There were few pretensions to beauty of situation or elegance of outfit. The house stood upon the roadside, by a fresh-flowing spring, or among the great pine trees. The door was so roughly made that it creaked on its hinges, dragged across the floor, and had to be fastened with a latch which was lifted from the outside by a string put through a small hole. The wide fireplace, here as in the negro cabin, was the center of all family activity. By its side stood a great crane which swung back and forth the large pots and kettles for cooking the greens, bacon, and mush, the staples of Southern middle-class fare. The

crane was the object of wonderment to small boys who loved nothing better than to set it in motion and hear its strange but comforting song as it was pulled from over the crackling fire. In the chimney-corner there were a grindstone, a scythe, and a great bundle of broom straw tied against the wall and kept out of the rain. In this living-room the mother of the half score of farmer's children did her work day in and day out, cooking, washing, and ironing for the growing family. She was the first to rise in the morning and the last to retire at night.

If the family owned a negro family, a single cabin was provided near the larger one, and there in miniature the life of the master was re-lived from day to day, except that the farmer's wife tended the black children as well as her own, in order that every one who could might work in the fields with the stalwart farmer and his sons. The life of such a master and such a slave was hard and monotonous — the harder and the more monotonous in proportion as the master was more or less "on the make," for the ambition of such a man was to be the owner of a big plantation.

There was little in such a household that suggested books and papers or politics and religion.

On the plain board table which stood in the center of the best room there was a big family Bible with possibly a copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* by its side. From the joists were suspended bags of seed-corn, dried fruit, and great pods of red pepper; there was a great pine chest in the corner in which the best quilts and home-woven counterpanes were securely kept against the day when "company" came; over the door hung the rifle and by its side the powder horn which had done service at King's Mountain or even in the border wars of Scotland in behalf of Cameron or McDougal clans.

Outside the house was the kennel with always two or three dogs which, added to the neighboring hounds, readily made a pack for a chase after fox or deer. The barns and stables were built of logs and were none too large or comfortable for the stock. Chickens, ducks, and pigs were always to be found and there was constant noise, now of one, now of the other, clucking, squawking, and squealing each according to its kind. The garden was large and fertile. From it came cabbages, potatoes, beans, and roasting ears in abundance for both whites and blacks; and there were flowers along the borders, a pear tree in one corner, and a great scuppernong arbor in another. If there

were no great cotton crops, there were enough corn, potatoes, pork, and fowls to feed a numerous family.

Another and a lower grade of society lived on the waste lands and pine barrens and among the remote mountains. Of this life Olmsted writes *con amore*. It was less wholesome and less promising than that which has just been described. Larger families lived in small and dirty cabins where all slept in one room. Beds were filthy and filled with vermin and the floors were often the common mother earth covered with trash or straw. These people showed little ambition for the larger plantation life and little hope of personal or family betterment. They were contented to hunt on the lands of the planters, to fish for shad in the streams, and even to steal from the herds of their richer neighbors. Their dress was not unlike that of the slaves. Not a solitary book adorned their houses, nor were the morals of these illiterate whites higher than those of slaves. Reading and writing were as good as lost arts to them. The visitor or stranger who happened to pause at their cabin doors was stared at with curious and inquisitive eyes. To such a family a five-dollar piece was a rare thing indeed; but whisky was so common that rough

and fatal duels were fought on sight. There were the inevitable gun and powder horn, the lean and hungry hound, and a few chickens and ducks. There was usually a single stable which housed an aged horse, and there was certain to be a pig in a filthy sty.

Among the farmers and tenants, the poor whites and mountaineers, there was indifference toward the great planters of the South but no real hostility save in remote highland districts; and even the hostility of the mountaineers waned as improved means of transportation brought them into touch with the planters. Never did these highland folk, however, assume a friendly or sympathetic attitude toward the slave. The so-called "crackers," "red necks," and "hill-billies" had not as yet come to hate the negroes, for they little thought that these would ever be freedmen; but the embers of hatred smoldered, ready to be fanned into flame in later years, after the South had been scourged by war and transformed by an industrial revolution.

Altogether the people of the lower South were not unlike those of other sections. The great planters and landowners compared favorably with the industrial and commercial princes of the East. Their ideals and their culture were taken as the

standard of the cotton country; their houses, their liveries, their dress, and their manners were the best of the time. Like wealthy men of all ages, they cultivated the arts in an amateurish fashion; they loved to sit to artists for their portraits, and they liked to read good books or at any rate put them upon the shelves of their libraries. It was even a boast of the most enlightened of them before 1860 that the planter was not only a reader of books and a patron of authors, but that he was himself a dabbler in *belles-lettres*. What, indeed, might the cotton kingdom not become if left to work out her own destiny?



## CHAPTER V

### RELIGION AND EDUCATION

CONTRARY to a common preconception, the people of the lower Southern States were sincerely religious, although at the beginning of their development as a peculiar section of the country, they had little patience with what was called revealed religion. From the University of South Carolina, where many of their teachers and models of propriety were trained, there came the strong deistic utterances of Dr. Thomas Cooper, famous on two continents. Cooper was counted one of the great spirits of his time. Young men from all the cotton region flocked to his institution, where they heard him lecture on the Pentateuch after the critical manner of recent years. He was perhaps the first teacher in this country to break down the faith of men in the literal inspiration of the Bible. South Carolinians liked the scientific spirit which took nothing for granted — at least that was their attitude in 1819.

Of greater importance was the example of Thomas Jefferson, who had all his life been known as a deist. Late in his career Jefferson founded the University of Virginia with the intention that no religious creed should get a hearing there. A strong agnosticism prevailed for many years after his death, until the growing religious conservatism of the Virginians compelled the new University to take to its bosom the representatives of the leading churches as guides and monitors of its students. From still another center the new country received quite unorthodox, if not deistic, opinions. Transylvania University, "a seminary of true republicanism," was located at Lexington, Kentucky. Its president, Horace Holley, although a New Englander, was practically a deist. Among his four or five hundred students there were always many young men from the cotton States preparing themselves to be lawyers, physicians, and teachers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Roman Catholics of New Orleans, whose easy-going methods suited some twenty or thirty thousand merchants and planters, contributed their mite in the direction of religious orthodoxy. In New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Mobile there was a nucleus of Catholicism that might under better skies have won a controlling influence in large districts of the cotton kingdom. It did not so fall out, however, and the Catholics remained one of the minor denominations of the planter civilization.

It is still said in the South that, although there may be other roads to the Celestial City, no gentleman would choose any but the Episcopalian way. It may be doubted whether there were twenty thousand Episcopalians in all the region from Charleston to Galveston at the outbreak of the Civil War, yet members of "the church" were almost invariably found in the seats of the mighty, of governors, congressmen, and magistrates. St. Michael's Church in Charleston was the Westminster of the cotton country; and to be buried in the sacred soil of that parish was almost as good as to be alive in less favored provinces. In Savannah, Montgomery, Mobile, and New Orleans, the gentry belonged to the good old colonial church whose clergy were not so pious themselves as to be disagreeable father confessors. To own a handsomely bound prayer-book and to occupy the family pew once a year was evidence enough of one's religious regularity, even though one did hazard great stakes in the Charleston races. No curate thought less of his patron for his interest in this sport.

The hard work of saving the souls of common men was left to such leaders of other denominations as the Presbyterian preachers who had for half a

century taught the up-country farmers the shorter catechism and the Greek roots. Since the late colonial days young and muscular Christian missionaries, nourished upon Calvin's *Institutes* and Virgil's *Æneid* at the College of New Jersey, poured into the Southern up-country. They preached their stern and unbending doctrine on the Sabbath, and on week-days they set scores of young men to work upon the classics. From sunrise to sunset these earnest seekers after knowledge pored over their Greek and Latin, convinced that the salvation of their souls depended upon the memorizing of thousands of heroic lines or upon explaining to their masters the intricacies of languages that had not been spoken by any considerable number of people since the fall of Constantinople.

Men and preachers trained in these schools were not likely to endure very long the presence of such philosophers as Thomas Cooper or to manifest continued devotion to the inconsistencies of such dilettante rationalists as Thomas Jefferson: they must know the ground they stood upon. Once they had won over the small farmers of the hills in the two Carolinas and Georgia, these teachers of a sterner faith were in a strategic

position when small farmers became big cotton-planters with scores of slaves about them. They took command in these three States before 1840. Presbyterians became governors and members of Congress without waiting for the consent of their religious seniors. The president of the University of North Carolina was a Presbyterian divine, for all the world like the good Dr. Witherspoon of Princeton. In South Carolina President Cooper was brought to trial for his "shameful atheism" in 1834. He was found unfit for his high position and promptly turned out to graze at eighty years of age! John H. Thornwell, a student of Cooper's, was one of the powers behind the movement and not many years passed before he was himself the president of the University. Not to be outdone in the matter, Thornwell founded, in the very shadow of the University, the Southern Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where young scions of old houses could thenceforth be instructed aright in the vital doctrines of the great Genevan.

From Cooper and Jefferson to Thornwell and Calvin was a long road to travel in two decades; but the South Carolinians went the whole distance without knowing that they had moved from their first position. What South Carolinians did was

good form, and other Southerners were likely to follow suit. Even the great Calhoun became interested in Calvinism and manifested a genuine concern in the growing religiosity of the planters. But the Calvinist meat was too strong for babes. While the Presbyterians put poor Cooper to rout, gave the professors at the University of Virginia anxious nights, and sent President Holley hastening away from Lexington, they did not hold the more illiterate Southerners of the hills to their way of thinking. A planter might be a good Presbyterian; but a "cracker" or a "red neck" found the Princeton faith too drastic. He grasped with difficulty the doctrines of the divines. Presbyterianism, moreover, grew more aristocratic as its members became more wealthy and better educated. A denomination which furnished governors and presidents of universities could not have its preachers shedding tears in the pulpit and interlining their hymns for ignorant congregations.

So the larger part of the work of saving souls fell to Baptists and Methodists. From the days of Daniel Marshall and his wife, half-illiterate men had traversed every county of the South and had preached in bush arbors to thousands of "dying men and women," whom they called back to fullness

of life. In the backwoods of South Carolina, Georgia, and the other cotton States these earnest, God-fearing men preached and prayed, wept and sang, till thousands of the neglected were made conscious of their individual existence and of their social importance. There were three or four hundred thousand of these converts and recruits, some from the planters of the coastal plains, more from the farmers of the hills, but most from the poor and remote settlements where people were out of touch with the currents of the times. Before 1860 about a million of the people of the lower South were connected with the churches, and of these the vast majority were Baptists and Methodists.

Meantime a great social transformation had taken place in the lower South. In the beginning nearly all these people had been opponents of slavery and of all forms of privilege. But, as farmers became planters and landless men became farmers and owners of their "labor," opposition to slavery and privilege almost disappeared. Even the masses of poorer people and church members became defenders of the existing régime. While the Catholics and the Episcopalians had been content to let civil affairs take their own course and had

promptly adjusted themselves to the social stratifications which they saw about them, the other denominations had at first protested and then had gone into the highways and the hedges after the inarticulate masses of men, only to find in the end that both they and their converts became, like their older religious brethren, conservatives and owners of slaves.

The Methodist and Baptist denominations had wrought a similar work in the North. Their missionaries carried the Gospel to the East and to the rising West. Jesse Lee, Peter Cartwright, Jonathan Going, and their kind preached and wept and sang in New England, the Middle States, and the Northwest until the common people were won. Cartwright said that the power of the Devil was fairly overcome in Illinois and Indiana before 1860. Literally millions of small farmers and men without property joined the new churches. As time went on most of these men became well-dressed, prosperous citizens, conscious of their worth. In the absence of the institution of slavery in their midst, they kept to the early idea that the holding of men in bondage was a sin, but they were not disposed to attack the South because of its slavery.



In 1843 Orange Scott, a very able preacher of New England, stirred the consciences of his Methodist followers on the subject of slavery in much the same way that Garrison was stirring the minds of deists and agnostics. But the leaders of the denomination refused to be stirred. Scott then withdrew from the church and carried with him fifteen thousand earnest followers. The menace was so great that in 1844, when the national Methodist conference met in New York, although there were other things to be done, the one thing that all men thought about was the healing of the schism. This, however, could not be done unless the Southern Methodists, who composed at least half the church, yielded to the demand that they give up slavery. The test turned on the case of Bishop Andrew of Georgia, whose wife owned slaves. The discipline of the denomination had declared from the beginning that no preacher should own slaves. Andrew was a bishop who must minister to the churches even in New England. He must either give up his wife's slaves or give up the work to which he had been ordained and in which he was a master spirit. It was a hard alternative. The Southern Methodists chose to defend and maintain slavery and to make Andrew's case their own;

the Northern Methodists took the view of Orange Scott and William Lloyd Garrison. Both parties were friendly but in deadly earnest. They separated. They could not do otherwise, for the people of the cotton States would have banned forever any preacher who attacked slavery, and the Methodists of New England, at any rate, would have refused to countenance a clergyman who endorsed slavery. The Methodist Church South was therefore organized in 1846, with Joshua Soule of Ohio as its leading bishop.

From the date of the separation to the outbreak of the Civil War the Methodist Church increased as it had never increased before. The membership doubled in fifteen years. Preachers like McTyeire and Capers and McSparran became as well known to the lower South as leading governors and congressmen. McTyeire published a little handbook<sup>1</sup> which taught what the true relations of masters and slaves should be. Dr. William A. Smith of Virginia, who was very influential in the cotton States, argued in a book which was widely discussed that slavery was divinely established and that it was the duty of all good men to defend it.

<sup>1</sup> H. N. McTyeire: *Duties of Masters and Servants* (Premium Essays of the Southern Baptist Publication Society, Charleston, 1851).

Preachers owned slaves; planters guided the polity of the church; and the Bible became the arsenal from which the best pro-slavery weapons were drawn. And as all men had now accepted the total and absolute inspiration of the Bible, the thrusts of these weapons were not easy to parry.

What happened to the Methodists happened likewise to the national Baptist organization. When in 1844 the Baptist Foreign Mission Board, sitting in Boston, refused to send a slaveholder as a missionary, Dr. Basil Manly, a leading Baptist preacher who was also president of the University of Alabama, made protest, carried the matter to the Baptist state convention, and procured the adoption of resolutions condemning the rule of the Foreign Mission Board and refusing further co-operation. The next year representatives of the Southern Baptists assembled in August and organized the Southern Baptist Convention. The best and ablest preachers of the denomination were present and guided the deliberations of the assembly. Manly, Richard Fuller, A. M. Poindexter, and the rest assumed the rôle at once of religious statesmen. In a short while they published at denominational expense prize essays on the subject of the relations of Christian masters to their

slaves. The institutions of the South became the institutions of the church. Sermons and denominational influences became increasingly pro-slavery. The membership of the Baptist Church increased a hundred per cent during the next fifteen years. Clergymen were entirely at one with their planter deacons who, like their Methodist friends, governed the polity of the church.

Although the Presbyterians avoided a break in their national organization before 1861, it was not because the same influences were not at work. The clergy of the lower South quietly assumed control of the national assemblies. Dr. Thornwell, who became the real leader of American Presbyterians, was president of the University of South Carolina for a time, then president of the Southern Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Columbia, and all the while editor of the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, which was for many years one of the most influential periodicals in the American religious world. Thornwell was close to Calhoun before the death of that statesman; he was the idol of young Presbyterian preachers all over the South, and the envy of those of other denominations; and there have been very few pulpit orators in this country who equaled him. Next to Thornwell

stood another remarkable figure, Dr. Benjamin M. Palmer, like Thornwell a South Carolinian, the idolized pastor of the largest church in New Orleans. The attitude of most Southern preachers without distinction of denominations may be seen in the following quotation from Palmer's Thanksgiving sermon in 1860:

The providential trust [of the Southern people] is to conserve and perpetuate the institution of domestic slavery as now existing. . . . With this institution assigned to our keeping we reply to all who oppose us that we hold the trust from God and we are prepared to stand or fall as God may appoint. . . . [This attitude embraces] the circle of our relations, touches the four cardinal points of our duty to ourselves, to our slaves, to the world, and to Almighty God. It establishes the nature and solemnity of our present trust, to preserve and transmit our existing system of domestic servitude with the right, unchallenged by man, to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it. This trust we will discharge in the face of the worst possible peril. . . . Should the madness of the hour appeal to the arbitration of the sword, we will not shrink even from the baptism of fire. If modern crusaders stand in serried ranks upon some plain of Esdraelon, there shall we be in defense of our trust. Not till the last man has fallen behind the last rampart, shall it drop from our hands; and then only in surrender to the God who gave it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Cary Johnson: *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, Richmond, Virginia, 1906, vol. I, pp. 210, 213.

This expression of one of the ablest and purest of Southern preachers met with wide-spread if not universal acceptance. Such unity and such complete religious organization as the lower South now presented gave every assurance of success to the program of religious education which Thornwell, Manly, and leading Methodists everywhere advocated. The Presbyterians had the greater theological schools and they exercised the greatest influence upon the collegiate teaching of the South. But the Baptists had important institutions in North Carolina, as well as Furman University in South Carolina, Mercer University in Georgia, and Howard College in Alabama. They began in remarkable fashion to build a theological school at Greenville, South Carolina, which should offer as full and thorough courses in divinity as were to be found anywhere else in the country. They raised a hundred thousand dollars for their initial endowment fund in 1857 and another hundred thousand was subscribed in the next two years. Of this movement the leader was James P. Boyce, brother of the radical secessionist member of Congress, and himself one of the richest men in the South. The Methodists sent their sons to Randolph-Macon in Virginia to learn wisdom and theology from

William A. Smith, an acknowledged pro-slavery leader. But another school of the prophets was opened at Emory, Georgia, a little while before the war began. Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists had finally come to one opinion about the higher education of their clergy; they were in direct control of more than half of the colleges of their section; and their spirit prevailed in all the state institutions.

It is not difficult to understand the tendency and purpose of education in a community led and guided by sincere and able religious teachers of the mold of Palmer and Manly. If they sought to give every young clergyman a collegiate and even theological training, they were not less interested in pressing upon all the necessity of higher education for the laity. The result was that in the decade between 1850 and 1860 practically every college and university in the South doubled its attendance.<sup>1</sup> The University of Virginia had

<sup>1</sup> Twice as many young men per thousand of the population were in colleges in the lower South or in some of the Eastern institutions as were sent from similar groups in other parts of the country. Eleven thousand students were enrolled in the colleges of the cotton States, while in Massachusetts, with half as many white people as were found in all the cotton States, there were only 1733 college students. Illinois, with a population of 1,712,000 or more than half as many white people had three thousand young men in her colleges. The income of all the

nearly a thousand students, young men from every cotton State with their servants and horses and hounds, as well as with their Greek and Latin texts. At the Universities of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana there was not only growth in numbers but improvement in the quality of the students and in the character of the courses offered. At the University of South Carolina Francis Lieber gave the best work in political science that was found in the country, and at the same time Joseph Le Conte was feeling his way to a theory of the origin of species which in 1859 made Charles Darwin the foremost of scientists. At the University of New Orleans Joseph C. Nott was giving instruction in ethnology which found expression in many scientific writings and which applied the principles of the so-called law of the survival of the fittest; nor was the work of J. D. B. De Bow as a teacher of commercial subjects behind the best of his time. The

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higher institutions of the lower South in 1860 was \$708,000, which represented an increase of more than a hundred per cent over the figures for 1850. The six New England States, with the best public school system in the world outside of Germany and with an accumulated wealth far in excess of that of the cotton region, spent only \$368,469 per year in collegiate education, and their population of 3,235,000 sent only 3748 young men to college. (*U. S. Census 1860: Mortality and Miscellaneous Statistics*, p. 505.)



medical colleges of Charleston, Mobile, and New Orleans were already preventing young Southerners from going to the University of Pennsylvania in such numbers as formerly.

The promise of the lower South in learning and science was so great that the ablest teachers of the time were not loath to settle there. Robert Dale Owen, one of the foremost geologists of the North, was sorely disappointed when he failed to obtain a chair in the University of Alabama in 1847. And the elder Agassiz hardly knew whether to accept a position at Harvard or to remain a professor in the Medical College of Charleston, where he did some of his greatest work. Audubon did the better part of his famous *Birds of America* in the neighborhood of New Orleans, while his next great book, *Quadrupeds of America*, was in large measure the result of work he did with John Bachman of Charleston. Joseph Le Conte tells of a conversation he had with Langdon Cheves in the summer of 1858 in which the latter outlined the theory of the survival of the fittest as a principle that scientific men ought to work out.

Even if in some respects the standards of Southern colleges in 1860 can be criticized, it remains true that they had made greater progress than

similar institutions in other parts of the country. Gentlemen had become conscious of their social and political responsibilities. They were the favored class; they must govern, and they prepared to do so by educating their sons as they had not been accustomed to do before the new Southern social philosophy was adopted or before the issue between North and South was so clearly and sharply formulated.

Nor was the improvement of the common schools less significant. The greatest social theorists of the South, Harper and his followers, believed and taught that every white man should have an opportunity of higher education and that talent wherever found should be subsidized by the State. In response to this teaching the reforms of Horace Mann in New England and of Thaddeus Stevens in Pennsylvania were being applied by William H. Ruffner in Virginia, which always influenced the lower South; by Calvin S. Wiley in North Carolina; and by the famous William L. Yancey and President Manly of the State University in Alabama. In South Carolina and in Mississippi the same spirit was at work, one of the chief reformers being the redoubtable John H. Thornwell, whose writings on the subject of popular

education are not the least creditable of his numerous activities.<sup>1</sup>

In the matter of illiteracy the planter civilization was in worse plight than any other section. In a population of 2,500,000 white people there were 175,000 illiterates, somewhat more than were found in States like Indiana and Illinois, although the difference is so small that one would not do well to insist upon the comparison. In the lower South distances were so great and population so sparse that the masses could not be easily reached by education. The schools were of recent origin, and books and newspapers went mainly to the plantation houses along the main currents of intercourse, the rivers, railroads, and greater highways.

But if illiteracy had not been overcome — and under post-bellum conditions it has taken half a century to make much progress — there was little

<sup>1</sup> Although the States were not so liberal in their grants to lower schools as to colleges and universities, yet there were 425,600 children in the schools of the cotton States in 1860. This showed that one child in every seven of the white population in the lower South was in school, at least for a short term. In the remainder of the country the ratio was one to five or five and a half. In the cotton States \$2,432,000 was expended each year upon the common schools and \$1,383,000 in the maintenance of academies and private schools. Comparison with Eastern conditions or with those of the Northwest shows once again that the planters were not far behind in actual performance and that they were in the lead in the ratio of progress.

crime and lunacy. In many counties jails stood open; and in all the counties and towns the reports showed an astonishingly small percentage of delinquents. The open spaces of the country gave men free room. The criminally disposed were not in so large a proportion as in other parts of the country; nor did many break down under the conditions of life and find their way into the hospitals for the insane. The planters claimed much credit for this favorable showing, though in truth it was rather their outdoor life than any social arrangements that reduced the numbers of these unfortunate classes.

Did no kindly man rise to ask something for the unfortunate slave? The effect of the separation of the Methodist and Baptist churches in 1844 and 1845 stirred the preachers to give the slaves a part of the Gospel at least. From 1845 to the outbreak of the war, men like Bishop Weightman of South Carolina devoted their best efforts to lifting the negro from his slough of religious ignorance and superstition. Churches were built on the larger plantations; more room was prepared in the older church buildings for the accommodation of negro congregations; and every church had its gallery for the slaves. But in spite of all the efforts of the

preachers to induce in them a quiet and reverential demeanor, the black worshipers would cry aloud and sometimes chant mournful songs during the services.

Sermons for negroes were not preached from such texts as "The truth shall make you free," but from such more appropriate themes as "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters" and "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." Negroes were not allowed to hold religious meetings without the presence of some white man. They might be taught to read the Bible, the Prayer Book, and the hymnals of Methodists and Baptists, but more learning was not thought good for them. The reason for this point of view requires no explanation here. If the negro did not relish having to worship frequently in the white man's church, he at least did realize that his master was becoming more thoughtful of his human interests.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PLANTER IN POLITICS

THE political basis of the plantation system was the county court, and the county court of the South came from the banks of the James and the York rivers. In old Virginia a county court was composed of a group of justices of the peace meeting once a month to try petty cases of law. These justices were the grandees of their respective neighborhoods. They were vestrymen in the established church, owners of plantations, and lords of manors. Their wives were the ladies of the land and their daughters set the hearts of young blades aflame when they appeared in church. They were men of good common sense, familiar with the codes of Virginia and to a less degree acquainted with the precedents of English law courts. Everybody looked up to them; and they made themselves responsible in considerable measure for the good behavior of the countryside.

What they thought was right was likely to become law.

Now when these bewigged and bepowdered gentlemen took their seats on the county bench, the wheels of justice in the old commonwealth of Virginia began to revolve. But aside from the ordinary business of courts, they sat in administrative sessions to appoint sheriffs and road overseers and to order the building of bridges and schoolhouses. At informal meetings they determined which of their number ought to stand for election to the next assembly, passed upon the conduct of returning members of Congress, and as time went on learned to denounce the conduct of rascally Yankees. The government of Virginia during the first half of the nineteenth century rested securely upon the shoulders of the county justices of the peace.

In fact, these justices inherited their social position from honorable English ancestors who had sworn by the name of the King; or, if they were self-made men, they were duly recognized by the planter gentry as worthy of a place among them. The county bench was the source of many good things. Vacancies in the court were filled by the surviving judges; and all was done with such

regard to precedent and after such deliberation that county courts seldom ran amuck. Through all the storms of the Revolution and the trials of the Jeffersonian period, these local organizations functioned smoothly and never for a moment lost their hold either upon the public or upon the course of events.

This was the model upon which South Carolina remade her judicial system when at the end of the Revolution she took into political partnership her great and growing up-country. The county courts of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi were but images of Virginia institutions planted upon a distant soil. Florida and Louisiana readjusted their French and Spanish procedure to fit the general model, though retaining the Napoleonic code. Texas took her system from Missouri, which in turn had taken hers from Virginia.

The justice of the peace was an institution of the lower South quite as much as of Virginia herself. To know this gentleman of the old school, this humane and good-natured autocrat, mildly proud of himself and keenly resentful of any criticism of his Latin or of his law, is to know the political life of the South as well as of the cotton kingdom, because every justice of the peace, save on the



distant frontier, was a slaveholder or likely soon to become such, a conservative in politics and religion, and a member or prospective member of the Legislature.

The political power of the cotton kingdom therefore was firmly lodged in the hands of successful business men. There was never in America a more perfect oligarchy of business men than that which ruled in the time of Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens. Laws were made by the owners of plantations; the higher courts were established by their decrees; governors of States were of their choosing; and members of Congress were selected and maintained in office in accordance with their wishes. And, as we have already seen, they were the ruling members of all the churches. Truly nothing of importance could happen in the lower South without their consent. This fact gave to the South its unity of political purpose and that moderation of social change which men of wealth always prefer. Security of property, loyalty to church, and safety in education were the guarantees of the system.

Still, there were party differences. The older Federalist groups along the coast of Carolina and Georgia had slowly merged into the Jeffersonian

party after it had become "safe and sane." Jackson disrupted that party and brought into power a mass of Western farmers and land-hungry tenants. At once the Federalist areas and the big black counties along all the rivers in the lower South formed a party of opposition. Though Henry Clay became the sponsor of this party, national impotence was its rôle, for no great aggressive party is likely to grow out of conservative beginnings. The Jackson "rough necks" became the sober Democrats of Polk's Administration and conservative reactionaries in the Administrations of Pierce and Buchanan. The larger planters and justices of the older counties everywhere tended to follow Clay, while the smaller planters, the rising business men, liked the rougher Jackson way. Besides, Jackson could carry the West, and the votes of the West were necessary to any aggressive national policy. But these differences were the differences of older and younger groups, not the differences of social irreconcilables. Consequently, though each party twitted the other on occasion with being disloyal to slavery, in any great crisis they were almost certain to unite, for, whatever happened, the planters felt that they must control the cotton kingdom.

If the planters controlled the lower South, they were likely to control the border States; and if they held these two sections together in national legislation, they were more than likely to guide the policy of the United States as a whole, for a compact minority with great wealth behind it and with leisure to devote to public affairs is almost certain to govern any country. That is, a population of two and a half millions in the lower South, with only a tenth of them directly connected with slavery, would guide a nation of twenty millions, nine-tenths of whom were either outspoken or silent opponents of slavery and all it connoted.

Under these circumstances the leaders of the lower South undertook about 1840 to widen the area of slavery, that is, expand the cotton kingdom. John C. Calhoun, who controlled a large following in both political parties in the eastern end of the lower South, was an ardent advocate of expansion. The young Senator from Mississippi, Robert Walker, a leader of the Jackson wing of the planters on the Mississippi and a most adroit politician, was even more ardently in favor of annexations. After some years of maneuvering the two men effected a working alliance of the cotton men of the South and the farmers of the West; and in the

Democratic convention of 1844 they committed the Democratic party of the country to their ambitious policy. They defeated Henry Clay at the time when he had set his heart on the presidency and elected James K. Polk, who completed the annexation of Texas, declared war on Mexico, and took possession of New Mexico, California, and Oregon, in spite of the opposition of John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, Martin Van Buren, and Clay himself.

The success of the movement gave the planters such confidence in themselves and such prestige before the country that they felt themselves invincible. Southern and Western volunteers offered themselves with such enthusiasm and fought over the Mexican hills and mountains with such brilliancy that Southern members of Congress declared that the whole North American continent should be seized and held. Western Democrats like Senator Douglas of Illinois shared this vision of a continental republic. If Jefferson Davis, just entering political life from the Southwest, was set upon making an American lake of the Gulf of Mexico, Lewis Cass, speaking for the Northwest, was equally covetous of Canada.

The imposing position of the planters in the

national life stirred the aged Adams to propose the secession of the Northern States and caused New England men of more sober cast of mind to contemplate that last desperate move of the defeated party. But in the very hour of victory Polk and his Southern supporters denied to the Northwest the improvements which they asked for their rivers and harbors and at the same time refused some of their leaders appointments which were thought to be their due. In August, 1846, Jacob Brinkerhoff of Ohio and David Wilmot of western Pennsylvania started in the Democratic ranks a revolt of which the defeated and sore Van Buren made utmost use. Anti-slavery men balked at the acquisition of territory from Mexico unless it should first be declared free soil; and planter interests suffered many setbacks in the House of Representatives.

In the succeeding presidential election Van Buren broke from the ranks of his party, set himself up as an anti-slavery candidate for the presidency, and defeated Cass, the candidate of the Democratic party. As for the Whig party, it had only to profit by these dissensions. It nominated and elected General Zachary Taylor, who, though himself a Southerner, was not committed to the designs of the

planters. Although the party convention had not framed a platform, many Whig leaders throughout the campaign had declared that the area of slavery must not be extended through the aid or connivance of the national legislature. The Taylor Administration therefore was not disposed to allow the planters to reap the fruits of their success.

Balked in their plans, the spokesmen of Mississippi, duly prompted by Calhoun, gathered in a mass meeting at Jackson, their state capital, early in December, 1849. They called upon the people of Mississippi and of the other planter States to arouse themselves and defend their property and their institutions. Later the Legislature of Mississippi elected delegates to a Southern convention to be held at Nashville, Tennessee, in June, 1850. All the other Southern States responded with more or less enthusiasm. If Congress refused to allow slavery to be carried into California or New Mexico, then — according to the threat often heard — the cotton States would secede.

Scenting the danger beforehand, Clay returned once again to the Senate. He alone of the Whig nationalists had an important following among the planters of the lower South. Half the delegates to the Nashville convention proved to be his followers;

and in States like Mississippi and Louisiana there were Unionist Democrats who were not ready to break up the country merely if slavery were refused protection in California. Realizing his strength, Clay arrived betimes at the capital and set his friends to work. His reasonableness, his refusal to have relations with the President, his dislike of Seward, and his hatred of Weed, carried Democrats and slave-owners like Thomas Ritchie, the famous editor, and Henry S. Foote, an ally of Calhoun, into his party. The compromise measures of 1850 under the masterful management of Clay melted away the stern resolution of the Nashville convention before it gathered.<sup>1</sup> The secession movement proved abortive. The planters acquiesced in the measures of Congress, and Calhoun died, broken-hearted at the failure of his program.

At this juncture the Whigs played into the hands of their opponents. Under the guidance of Seward, the Whig party refused to accept whole-heartedly the work of Clay, the compromise which had been forced upon them, and nominated for President in 1852 a neutral candidate, General Winfield Scott,

<sup>1</sup> For an account of these compromise measures of 1850, see Chapter VII of *The Anti-Slavery Crusade* by Jesse Macy (in *The Chronicles of America*).

on a platform of doubt. Seizing the opportunity with renewed hope, the planters "hand-picked" Franklin Pierce, accepted the work of Clay without qualification, and won the electoral vote of every State but four in the following November. The planters were now in a position to regain every point which they had lost in the compromise.

President Pierce sent Christopher Gadsden, president of a South Carolina railroad, to Mexico to purchase another strip of Mexican territory on which a great southern Pacific railroad was to be built. And he sent Pierre Soulé, a most ardent Louisiana imperialist, to Spain to purchase Cuba at any cost. There was reason to believe he would come back successful. At any rate every American diplomat in Europe was apparently counseled to lend assistance. If Soulé was successful, two other slave States would be promptly admitted. The outlook was so bright that the Secretary of State, William L. Marcy, became a candidate for the Democratic nomination of 1856 on a platform of Southern expansion.

The planters renewed their hopes, and well they might. A majority of the House of Representatives was Democratic; the Senate was overwhelm-



ingly Democratic; the President and Cabinet were in full sympathy with the Southern Democratic leaders; and seven of the nine justices of the Supreme Court were either owners of plantations or pro-slavery in attitude. The chairmen of all the great committees of Congress were owners of slaves and ready to initiate legislation in the interest of the lower South. Why should not the planters, experts in government, direct the policy of the United States?

Facts indicated that in the cotton country the planters did set themselves this task. Their economic interests urged them on; their social philosophy and their religion gave them conscious unity of purpose. Political unity, the condition of immediate success, was within sight. From the time when, in 1852, Alexander Stephens and Robert Toombs deserted the Whig ranks for those of the Democratic party, the political solidarity of the planters was more definitely assured than it had ever been under the bipartizan régime. Upon the death of Clay most of the followers of that brilliant politician prepared to join the ranks of the Democracy. With the exception of some sporadic resistance from Native Americans, or Know-Nothings, in 1854-56, the party of Davis and Slidell and

Toombs and Stephens governed the South, and the whole country as well, until 1860. Only a few lonely spirits such as Andrew Johnson and John Bell, both of Tennessee, and the famous Sam Houston of Texas, distinguished themselves in Congress by voting against the dominant Southerners.

But this unity depended upon an avowed Unionist policy, not upon the dis-Union program as put forward at Nashville in 1850. Not even Davis himself desired separate Southern action after 1852. The planter politicians now sought allies in the East and the Northwest. Asa Bigler, the boss of Pennsylvania, Tammany Hall and John A. Dix of New York, Toucy of Connecticut, and Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts — these were already enlisted, while the aged Van Buren and his son, “Prince” John, made haste to return to their former allegiance now that Cass had been duly punished. From the Northwest, Senators Allen of Ohio, Cass of Michigan, Jesse Bright of Indiana, Douglas of Illinois, and Dodge of Iowa answered the call of the lower South. Scores of lesser lights followed in the orbit of these larger luminaries. Nothing succeeds like success; and at that time the planters were unquestionably

successful in adding to their political following both in Washington and in their state capitals.

Still, the guarantee of a long lease of power at the national capital required a complete unity of purpose at home. And that solidarity was made the objective of a campaign of publicity which became intensive in 1853 and which closed only with the echoes of the big guns at Charleston in 1861. Leading governors, great planters, merchants, and editors assembled from year to year in commercial conventions at Charleston, Savannah, Montgomery, and Vicksburg to deliberate upon the interests and ideals of the lower South and of the border States as well. The conservation of cotton soils, the efficiency of labor units, the growing importance of manufactures in the South, the importation of slaves from Africa, free schools for all whites, religious instruction for the negroes, railroads to the Pacific, and steamship lines to Europe were the staple subjects of discussion.

Of the items in the program two require more particular attention here. The more important one was the building of a railroad from some point on the lower Mississippi to San Francisco. If this road were built at national expense and by liberal land grants, as Davis proposed, a tier of slave States

would inevitably be set up all along the line, and California itself would be drawn into the lower Southern group. If the planter life and ideal were thus spread across the continent, the commercial interests of the Middle West and even of the Missouri valley must seek outlets through Southern ports. For the new railroads which would be built through wide regions of prairie and forest would thus open new areas to development. The Mobile and Ohio, the Louisville and Nashville, and the Illinois Central systems were already under way. If Memphis and New Orleans became terminals of the proposed Pacific system, then they, with Vicksburg and St. Louis, would become the cities of the future.

When Gadsden returned from Mexico with the assurance that enough territory could be acquired to make a Southern Pacific route feasible, the whole influence of the Administration directed by the able Secretary of War was brought to bear upon the undertaking. But Douglas foresaw the consequences of the Davis plan and hastened to defeat it by promoting a Central Pacific Railroad with Chicago as its eastern terminus. His Kansas-Nebraska bill and the consequent anti-slavery agitation of 1854 defeated the immediate ambitions

of the cotton-planters; and from that date to his death the lower South hated and distrusted and feared Douglas.<sup>1</sup>

Of equal importance to the lower South was the problem of population and immigration. Southern conventions discussed the matter long and ably. The annual increase of population in the North due to immigration from Europe was nearly half a million. If this increase continued, no amount of solidarity and coöperation of leaders in the cotton kingdom could save that section from relative decline. At the same time, to invite a large inflow of Germans, Irish, and English laborers would endanger the planter control. Nor was it likely that foreign workers would readily settle in the South. There was little free land left, and slaves were sold at prices that made the ambition of poor men to become planters seem fantastic. Far-seeing planters, as we have noted, urged the diversion of capital to manufacturing so as to attract foreign labor and to create home markets for Southern products. But this industrial transition could not be made in a day.

<sup>1</sup> The history of the Kansas-Nebraska bill is recounted, with a difference of emphasis, in Chapter X of *The Anti-Slavery Crusade* and in Chapter II of *Abraham Lincoln and the Union* (in *The Chronicles of America*).

South Carolinians took up the problem of relative decline in population as early as 1855 and recommended the repeal of the laws of 1807 and 1819 which forbade the foreign slave trade. It was assumed that the laboring population of the lower South was to consist of negro slaves and must be increased by new importations from Africa. The reopening of the slave-trade, to be sure, would once have caused protest and apprehension. But the teachings of Dew and Harper, the attitude of the churches, and the attacks of the abolitionists, had dissipated all doubts and fears. The prosperity of the cotton States now required large numbers of slaves from Africa. Upon this black and stolid human foundation would the Carolinians build and expand their empire, which was to embrace Cuba, eastern Mexico, and California.

In the Southern convention of 1858 William L. Yancey appeared as the champion of the new policy. As he and his friends conceived it, the importation of hundreds of thousands of blacks from Africa would not only offset Northern importations of labor from Europe, but, by reducing the price of slaves and increasing the profits of masters, it would give poor men a better chance to share in the "blessings" of slavery and thus widen the

foundations of Southern influence, and it would increase the total population and thus increase the representation of the planters in Congress. From every point of view this importation of slaves would add new advantages to those already possessed by the lower South. The great obstacle would be the opposition on the part of the North to the repeal of the laws against the foreign slave-trade. A minor obstacle was the reluctance of border States like Virginia to run the risk of losing their profits from the domestic slave-trade. If their slaves were not sold in the lower South, they would multiply on worn-out lands and become such a burden that emancipation might become necessary. But this objection was not considered to be a real one. Virginians would find in a stable and masterful cotton kingdom that which would counterbalance this disadvantage.

The objections which Congress would interpose were evaded by recommending to the States that they enact apprenticeship laws somewhat like those of colonial times and not unlike those of Illinois and Indiana in 1858. Under such laws black apprentices could be imported in large numbers and the Federal courts could not intervene. For nearly fifty years Southern and Northern

slave-traders had brought blacks from Africa and had sold sometimes as many as ten thousand a year, and yet no one had ever been effectively punished. Moreover, if slavery was a blessing — as men now believed it to be — what wrong could there be in selling slaves?

Before the debate was closed at the next Southern convention, Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia enacted laws under which numbers of negro apprentices from Africa found their way to the plantations. If these experiments proved successful, larger numbers would be imported. Of course difficulties might arise in the transfer of such apprentices, but since the benighted African would know nothing of the laws or of the distinctions between apprentices and slaves, there would be little difficulty in disposing of all as slaves. Free blacks could live in the lower South only by common consent, for the laws forbidding their presence were drastic, and they could easily be reduced to the same status as all other negroes.

Closely akin to this evasion of Federal law was the persistent Southern filibustering against Cuba and Central America. Soulé returned from Spain unsuccessful, and the brutal statement of the American attitude toward Cuba in the famous



Ostend manifesto brought reproach to President Pierce and his advisers. But even before this setback Narciso Lopez had led two or three expeditions against the coveted island. On one occasion as many as six hundred Americans had been landed and led against the Spanish authorities. A governor of Mississippi lent assistance in 1851 so openly that he was cited to appear before a grand jury in New Orleans; and a nephew of Senator John J. Crittenden was killed in Cuba in the same year fighting under the banner of Lopez. Public men and newspapers in every Southern city commended these movements. The greatest of all these free lance war-makers was William Walker of Tennessee, who attacked first Mexico and then Nicaragua, proclaiming himself a deliverer wherever he went. Twice he was arrested by the authorities of the United States, but each time Southern Senators defended him and his doings.

These incursions into Cuba were plainly intended to carry planter institutions to less fortunate countries, and the best thought of the South approved the purpose. Why should there not be an expanding cotton, rice, and sugar kingdom just as there was a growing industrial empire in the East and North?

The presidential election of 1856 was of primary importance. The mistakes of Pierce had made Douglas the foremost candidate of the Democrats, and the rising tide of opposition led by Seward gave evidence that the planters might soon be defeated in national politics and reduced to the necessity of secession if they intended to pursue their program unhindered. Yancey and Slidell and the other able leaders of the lower South attended the Democratic convention which met at Cincinnati in June, 1856. By careful management they prevented Douglas, their chief aversion, from winning the nomination, though his popularity at the North was very great, and they finally set up as their candidate James Buchanan, who had never "spoken ill of the South." This victory had not been won, however, without yielding to Douglas and the West the privilege of writing the party platform. It was but a restatement of the idea that the settlers in any new Territory should determine for themselves whether they would have slavery or not. It was the application to Territories of the principle of popular sovereignty which both then and later was acceptable to the up-country element in the South. Only the great planter group understood and opposed it, and

above all opposed Douglas, who was always talking about the plain people and local self-government.

Few campaigns in American history have ever been more hotly contested than that of 1856. There was frequent talk in responsible circles of the cotton kingdom that secession would surely follow the election of Frémont, the candidate of Seward and the new Republican party in the North. In Pennsylvania alone something like a million dollars was spent by the two leading parties — a huge sum for that time. But the planters won. They surrounded the President-elect and made perfectly sure that no dangerous men should get into the Cabinet. The men who had directed the policy of Pierce now directed that of Buchanan; and Davis, recently transferred to the Senate, John Slidell of Louisiana, and Jesse Bright of Indiana were the powers behind the throne. The planters still had the majority of the Senate and the Supreme Court, though the House was deadlocked. It would be the duty of the President to get the country out of the tangle in Kansas, for, if he succeeded, the young Republican party, which was composed of the most heterogeneous elements, would probably go to pieces.

Buchanan endeavored earnestly to solve the

Kansas problem. In spite of some opposition from his Southern advisers, he appointed Robert Walker Governor of the distracted Territory. Walker promptly reported that the only way out of the difficulty was to let the people decide the question of slavery for themselves without let or hindrance. That was what Douglas had said all along. But such a policy would make Kansas a free State and the lower South could not surrender so easily. Happily for the Southern leaders, the Supreme Court in the spring of 1857 was of the opinion that an owner of slaves had the legal right to carry his human property into any Territory and keep it regardless of all local opposition. Under the far-reaching Dred Scott decision, it would seem to be the duty of the country as a whole, under the Constitution, to guarantee the rights of property in slaves in all national domains.

If this decision was in harmony with the spirit of the Constitution, and it certainly seemed to be, the popular notion that the people of each Territory might forbid slavery was utterly untenable. Consequently when Walker urged the President to leave the problem in Kansas to the vote of a hostile local population, the planters with one voice denounced the idea. They pressed about the pliant

Buchanan, they carried the war into Congress, and they stirred the lower South to resistance. All the debates about the importation of slaves from Africa, the futile efforts still going forward at Madrid for the purchase of Cuba, the filibustering in Nicaragua, and the efforts to procure another part of Mexican territory, paled into insignificance before the crucial question whether "a mob" in Kansas should be allowed to deprive Southerners of rights of property in defiance of the Federal Supreme Court.

While Buchanan wavered, Douglas issued a declaration of war upon the President and announced that he would carry the matter before the people of the Northwest for decision. Every Southern Senator and almost every Southern leader deprecated such a move and denounced the man who made it. But Douglas found support in the North. Republican leaders, sore pressed for a popular champion of their cause, talked of making him their candidate for 1860. The planters won the President to their side; and the choice between the two points of view went first to the people of Illinois and later to the people of the whole country. In the contest in Illinois, there arose the prophetic figure of Abraham Lincoln, the very embodi-

ment of American democracy, declaring for simple majority rule. The decisions of the Supreme Court must yield to popular votes; laws and even constitutions must be remade to suit the wishes of simple majorities. If the Court refused, then the Court must be reconstituted; if laws gave more to slaveholders than the people wished, then laws must be repealed. Lincoln's position was that of one who appeals to the referendum and recall today, a far cry indeed from that which had led to the formation of the Union. If Lincoln had his way, the United States would become a democracy.

While Douglas won a reelection to the Senate on the issue as he pressed it, there was in reality little difference between him and Lincoln from the viewpoint of the lower South. What did it matter to the owner of slaves whether all the people of the North voted down his rights under the Constitution or whether the same thing were done by a majority in a single Territory? The whole point to him was that no majority anywhere could deprive him of rights guaranteed by the supreme law of the land. Upon this issue, almost every planter, whether of the cotton or of the tobacco States, took his stand. Yancey threatened revolution. The South Carolina leaders, following Robert

Barnwell Rhett, a life-long advocate of secession, began to "set their house in order," expecting to leave the Union in 1860. Every prominent member of Congress from the South veered round to the position of Jefferson Davis, who had said mournfully that the cotton States might have to leave the Union, although he refused to counsel such a course. Newspapers and teachers and preachers of all the churches in the lower South declared that the submission of the rights of the planters to plebiscites was revolutionary and subversive of all law and order. They prophesied that the business men of the North would one day rue the choice they were about to make. But it was not the business men of the North who were getting nervous or unruly — it was the democracy of the North.

The rulers of the cotton kingdom prepared for the struggle of 1860 while the war of North and South went sadly on in Kansas. Congress remained deadlocked: the Senate favored the South; the House, the North. Everything depended upon the outcome of the party conventions and the election of 1860. The Democrats met at Charleston. Douglas prepared long beforehand to win a majority of the delegates to that body. He would

have the convention declare in favor of popular sovereignty as the preceding convention had done with the aid of Southern votes; and then he would have the convention nominate him to the presidency. If he succeeded in both these moves, he would almost certainly be the successor to Buchanan.

To Davis and his planter followers such an outcome would be only a little less fatal than the election of a "black Republican." The cotton States could never submit to a President who juggled with the rights of property. They must first of all defeat Douglas. If they succeeded in this they might nominate a safer man and endeavor to defeat the Republicans in the succeeding general election. In other words, the planters had reached the point when they would deliberately sacrifice in the Northwest their allies of long standing rather than yield an inch in the matter of their rights in the Territories. Having vanquished Douglas, they would then meet Seward or Lincoln with the hope of further success.

When the Charleston convention met in April, 1860, a battle royal began between Douglas Democrats and the reactionary members of the party who accepted the leadership of Jefferson Davis. Neither faction would yield. When this became



clear, Yancey, the greatest orator of the South since Patrick Henry, made one of the famous unreported speeches of history. He reasoned with the Northern delegates, he stirred the emotions of the crowded galleries, and he raised the enthusiasm of his planter followers to the highest pitch. When he finished, bade farewell to the convention, and took his leave, the members from all the lower Southern States followed him. The first great bolt in American history had taken place. Buchanan and Davis, still in Washington, approved; John Slidell, August Belmont, and the Tammany Hall representatives lent Yancey assistance and money; and the reactionary elements of the party in the North applauded.

The great planter machine had reached its acme of influence and power; and all the cotton country submitted to its dictation. In fact, all the articulate elements of the lower South were represented in it. This organization now moved toward the nomination of a candidate of its own. The planters met again in Richmond and nominated for President John C. Breckinridge, a moderate Kentucky politician. The Douglas men reassembled in Baltimore and nominated their hero. To the surprise of most Southern public men, the

Republicans made Lincoln their standard bearer. Still other candidates were put forward by the so-called Constitutional Union party.

Lincoln was elected. The cotton States prepared to leave the Union. Their unique culture, their still powerful position in national politics, and their remarkable prosperity were all staked upon the event. They would form a State in which the laboring class should be the property of the capitalist; they would perfect a society in which every man should have a place and every man should keep his place. In the lower South there were to be slaves, farmers, and gentlemen. There would be no poverty; nor would there be any serious disagreement on the fundamentals of society, for sermons, speeches, books, and teaching in the colleges were all to defend the existing order and to look towards its perfecting. Society in the lower South was to be the realization unhindered of the social philosophy which began with the repudiation of the Declaration of Independence and ended with the explicit recognition of social inequality. There was then no doubt of final success, and there was little if any serious protest against the ideals that were to be realized.

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PART II

THE ANTI-SLAVERY CRUSADE

A CHRONICLE  
OF THE GATHERING STORM  
BY  
JESSE MACY

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# THE ANTI-SLAVERY CRUSADE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THE Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln marks the beginning of the end of a long chapter in human history. Among the earliest forms of private property was the ownership of slaves. Slavery as an institution had persisted throughout the ages, always under protest, always provoking opposition, insurrection, social and civil war, and ever bearing within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Among the historic powers of the world the United States was the last to uphold slavery, and when, a few years after Lincoln's proclamation, Brazil emancipated her slaves, property in man as a legally recognized institution came to an end in all civilized countries.

Emancipation in the United States marked the

conclusion of a century of continuous debate, in which the entire history of western civilization was traversed. The literature of American slavery is, indeed, a summary of the literature of the world on the subject. The Bible was made a standard text-book both for and against slavery. Hebrew and Christian experiences were exploited in the interest of the contending parties in this crucial controversy. Churches of the same name and order were divided among themselves and became half pro-slavery and half anti-slavery.

Greek experience and Greek literature were likewise drawn into the controversy. The Greeks themselves had set the example of arguing both for and against slavery. Their practice and their prevailing teaching, however, gave support to this institution. They clearly enunciated the doctrine that there is a natural division among human beings; that some are born to command and others to obey; that it is natural to some men to be masters and to others to be slaves; that each of these classes should fulfill the destiny which nature assigns. The Greeks also recognized a difference between races and held that some were by nature fitted to serve as slaves, and others to command as masters. The defenders of American slavery



therefore found among the writings of the Greeks their chief arguments already stated in classic form.

Though the Romans added little to the theory of the fundamental problem involved, their history proved rich in practical experience. There were times, in parts of the Roman Empire, when personal slavery either did not exist or was limited and insignificant in extent. But the institution grew with Roman wars and conquests. In rural districts, slave labor displaced free labor, and in the cities servants multiplied with the concentration of wealth. The size and character of the slave population eventually became a perpetual menace to the State. Insurrections proved formidable, and every slave came to be looked upon as an enemy to the public. It is generally conceded that the extension of slavery was a primary cause of the decline and fall of Rome. In the American controversy, therefore, the lesson to be drawn from Roman experience was utilized to support the cause of free labor.

After the Middle Ages, in which slavery under the modified form of feudalism ran its course, there was a reversion to the ancient classical controversy. The issue became clearly defined in the hands of

the English and French philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In place of the time-honored doctrine that the masses of mankind are by nature subject to the few who are born to rule, the contradictory dogma that all men are by nature free and equal was clearly enunciated. According to this later view, it is of the very nature of spirit, or personality, to be free. All men are endowed with personal qualities of will and choice and a conscious sense of right and wrong. To subject these native faculties to an alien force is to make war upon human nature. Slavery and despotism are, therefore, in their nature but a species of warfare. They involve the forcing of men to act in violation of their true selves. The older doctrine makes government a matter of force. The strong command the weak, or the rich exercise lordship over the poor. The new doctrine makes of government an achievement of adult citizens who agree among themselves as to what is fit and proper for the good of the State and who freely observe the rules adopted and apply force only to the abnormal, the delinquent, and the defective.

Between the upholders of these contradictory views of human nature there always has been and

there always must be perpetual warfare. Their difference is such as to admit of no compromise; no middle ground is possible. The conflict is indeed irresistible. The chief interest in the American crusade against slavery arises from its relation to this general world conflict between liberty and despotism.

The Athenians could be democrats and at the same time could uphold and defend the institution of slavery. They were committed to the doctrine that the masses of the people were slaves by nature. By definition, they made slaves creatures void of will and personality, and they conveniently ignored them in matters of state. But Americans living in States founded in the era of the Declaration of Independence could not be good democrats and at the same time uphold and defend the institution of slavery, for the Declaration gives the lie to all such assumptions of human inequality by accepting the cardinal axiom that all men are created equal and are endowed with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The doctrine of equality had been developed in Europe without special reference to questions of distinct race or color. But the terms, which are universal and as

broad as humanity in their denotation, came to be applied to black men as well as to white men. Massachusetts embodied in her state constitution in 1780 the words, "All men are born free and equal," and the courts ruled that these words in the state constitution had the effect of liberating the slaves and of giving to them the same rights as other citizens. This is a perfectly logical application of the doctrine of the Revolution.

The African slave-trade, however, developed earlier than the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence. Negro slavery had long been an established institution in all the American colonies. Opposition to the slave-trade and to slavery was an integral part of the evolution of the doctrine of equal rights. As the colonists contended for their own freedom, they became anti-slavery in sentiment. A standard complaint against British rule was the continued imposition of the slave-trade upon the colonists against their oft-repeated protest.

In the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, there appeared the following charges against the King of Great Britain:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the

persons of distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce.

Though this clause was omitted from the document as finally adopted, the evidence is abundant that the language expressed the prevailing sentiment of the country. To the believer in liberty and equality, slavery and the slave-trade are instances of war against human nature. No one attempted to justify slavery or to reconcile it with the principles of free government. Slavery was accepted as an inheritance for which others were to blame. Colonists at first blamed Great Britain; later apologists for slavery blamed New England for her share in the continuance of the slave-trade.

The fact should be clearly comprehended that the sentiments which led to the American Revolution, and later to the French Revolution in Europe, were as broad in their application as the human race itself — that there were no limitations nor

exceptions. These new principles involved a complete revolution in the previously recognized principles of government. The French sought to make a master-stroke at immediate achievement and they incurred counter-revolutions and delays. The Americans moved in a more moderate and tentative manner towards the great achievement, but with them also a counter-revolution finally appeared in the rise of an influential class who, by openly defending slavery, repudiated the principles upon which the government was founded.

At first the impression was general, in the South as well as in the North, that slavery was a temporary institution. The cause of emancipation was already advocated by the Society of Friends and some other sects. A majority of the States adopted measures for the gradual abolition of slavery, but in other cases there proved to be industrial barriers to emancipation. Slaves were found to be profitably employed in clearing away the forests; they were not profitably employed in general agriculture. A marked exception was found in small districts in the Carolinas and Georgia where indigo and rice were produced; and though cotton later became a profitable crop for slave labor, it was the producers of rice and indigo

who furnished the original barrier to the immediate extension of the policy of emancipation. Representatives from their States secured the introduction of a clause into the Constitution which delayed for twenty years the execution of the will of the country against the African slave-trade. It is said that a slave imported from Africa paid for himself in a single year in the production of rice. There were thus a few planters in Georgia and the Carolinas who had an obvious interest in the prolongation of the institution of slavery and who had influence enough to secure constitutional recognition for both slavery and the slave-trade.

The principles involved were not seriously debated. In theory all were abolitionists; in practice slavery extended to all the States. In some, actual abolition was comparatively easy; in others, it was difficult. By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, actual abolition had extended to the line separating Pennsylvania from Maryland. Of the original thirteen States seven became free and six remained slave.

The absence of ardent or prolonged debate upon this issue in the early history of the United States is easily accounted for. No principle of importance was drawn into the controversy; few

presumed to defend slavery as a just or righteous institution. As to conduct, each individual, each neighborhood enjoyed the freedom of a large, roomy country. Even within state lines there was liberty enough. No keen sense of responsibility for a uniform state policy existed. It was therefore not difficult for those who were growing wealthy by the use of imported negroes to maintain their privileges in the State.

If the sense of active responsibility was wanting within the separate States, much more was this true of the citizens of different States. Slavery was regarded as strictly a domestic institution. Families bought and owned slaves as a matter of individual preference. None of the original colonies or States adopted slavery by law. The citizens of the various colonies became slaveholders simply because there was no law against it.<sup>1</sup> The abolition of slavery was at first an individual matter or a church or a state policy. When the Constitution was formulated, the separate States had been accustomed to regard themselves as possessed of sovereign powers; hence there was no occasion for the citizens of one State to have a sense of

<sup>1</sup> In the case of Georgia there was a prohibitory law, which was disregarded.



responsibility on account of the domestic institutions of other States. The consciousness of national responsibility was of slow growth, and the conditions did not then exist which favored a general crusade against slavery or a prolonged acrimonious debate on the subject, such as arose forty years later.

In many of the States, however, there were organized abolition societies, whose object was to promote the cause of emancipation already in progress and to protect the rights of free negroes. The Friends, or Quakers, were especially active in the promotion of a propaganda for universal emancipation. A petition which was presented to the first Congress in February, 1790, with the signature of Benjamin Franklin as President of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, contained this concluding paragraph:

From a persuasion that equal liberty was originally, and is still, the birthright of all men, and influenced by the strong ties of humanity and the principles of their institutions, your memorialists conceive themselves bound to use all justifiable endeavors to loosen the bonds of slavery, and to promote the general enjoyment of the blessings of freedom. Under these impressions they earnestly entreat your attention to the subject of slavery; that you will be pleased to countenance the

restoration to liberty of those unhappy men, who, alone, in this land of freemen, are groaning in servile subjection; that you will devise means for removing this inconsistency of character from the American people; that you will promote mercy and justice towards this distressed race; and that you will step to the very verge of the power vested in you for discouraging every species of traffic in the persons of our fellowmen.<sup>1</sup>

The memorialists were treated with profound respect. Cordial support and encouragement came from representatives from Virginia and other slave States. Opposition was expressed by members from South Carolina and Georgia. These for the most part relied upon their constitutional guaranties. But for these guaranties, said Smith, of South Carolina, his State would not have entered the Union. In the extreme utterances in opposition to the petition there is a suggestion of the revolution which was to occur forty years later.

Active abolitionists who gave time and money to the promotion of the cause were always few in numbers. Previous to 1830 abolition societies resembled associations for the prevention of cruelty to animals — in fact, in one instance at least this was made one of the professed objects. These

<sup>1</sup> William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, p. 99.

societies labored to induce men to act in harmony with generally acknowledged obligations, and they had no occasion for violence or persecution. Abolitionists were distinguished for their benevolence and their unselfish devotion to the interests of the needy and the unfortunate. It was only when the ruling classes resorted to mob violence and began to defend slavery as a divinely ordained institution that there was a radical change in the spirit of the controversy. The irrepressible conflict between liberty and despotism which has persisted in all ages became manifest when slave-masters substituted the Greek doctrine of inequality and slavery for the previously accepted Christian doctrine of equality and universal brotherhood.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE CRUSADE

It was a mere accident that the line drawn by Mason and Dixon between Pennsylvania and Maryland became known in later years as the dividing line between slavery and freedom. The six States south of that line ultimately neglected or refused to abolish slavery, while the seven Northern States became free. Vermont became a State in 1791 and Kentucky in 1792. The third State to be added to the original thirteen was Tennessee in 1796. At that time, counting the States as they were finally classified, eight were destined to be slave and eight free. Ohio entered the Union as a State in 1802, thus giving to the free States a majority of one. The balance, however, was restored in 1812 by the admission of Louisiana as a slave State. The admission of Indiana in 1816 on the one side and of Mississippi in 1817 on the other still maintained the balance: ten free States stood against ten slave

States. During the next two years Illinois and Alabama were admitted, making twenty-two States in all, still evenly divided.

The ordinance for the government of the territory north of the Ohio River, passed in 1787 and reënacted by Congress after the adoption of the Constitution, proved to be an act of great significance in its relation to the limitation of slavery. By this ordinance slavery was forever prohibited in the Northwest Territory. In the territory south of the Ohio River slavery became permanently established. The river, therefore, became an extension of the original Mason and Dixon's Line with the new meaning attached: it became a division between free and slave territory.

It was apparently at first a mere matter of chance that a balance was struck between the two classes of States. While Virginia remained a slave State, it was natural that slavery should extend into Kentucky, which had been a part of Virginia. Likewise Tennessee, being a part of North Carolina, became slave territory. When these two Territories became slave States, the equal division began. There was yet an abundance of territory both north and south to be taken into the Union and, without any special plan or agitation, States

were admitted in pairs, one free and the other slave. In the meantime there was distinctly developed the idea of the possible or probable permanence of slavery in the South and of a rivalry or even a future conflict between the two sections.

When in 1819 Missouri applied for admission to the Union with a state constitution permitting slavery, there was a prolonged debate over the whole question, not only in Congress but throughout the entire country. North and South were distinctly pitted against each other with rival systems of labor. The following year Congress passed a law providing for the admission of Missouri, but, to restore the balance, Maine was separated from Massachusetts and was admitted to the Union as a State. It was further enacted that slavery should be forever prohibited from all territory of the United States north of the parallel  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , that is, north of the southern boundary of Missouri. It is this part of the act which is known as the Missouri Compromise. It was accepted as a permanent limitation of the institution of slavery. By this act Mason and Dixon's Line was extended through the Louisiana Purchase. As the western boundary was then defined, slavery could still be extended into Arkansas and into a part of what is

now Oklahoma, while a great empire to the northwest was reserved for the formation of free States. Arkansas became a slave State in 1836 and Michigan was admitted as a free State in the following year.

With the admission of Arkansas and Michigan, thirteen slave States were balanced by a like number of free States. The South still had Florida, which would in time become a slave State. Against this single Territory there was an immense region to the northwest, equal in area to all the slave States combined, which, according to the Ordinance of 1787 and the Missouri Compromise, had been consecrated to freedom. Foreseeing this condition, a few Southern planters began a movement for the extension of territory to the south and west immediately after the adoption of the Missouri Compromise. When Arkansas was admitted in 1836, there was a prospect of the immediate annexation of Texas as a slave State. This did not take place until nine years later, but the propaganda, the object of which was the extension of slave territory, could not be maintained by those who contended that slavery was a curse to the country. Virginia, therefore, and other border slave States, as they became committed to the

policy of expansion, ceased to tolerate official public utterances against slavery.

Three more or less clearly defined sections appear in the later development of the crusade. These are the New England States, the Middle States, and the States south of North Carolina and Tennessee. In New England, few negroes were ever held as slaves, and the institution disappeared during the first years of the Republic. The inhabitants had little experience arising from actual contact with slavery. When slavery disappeared from New England and before there had been developed in the country at large a national feeling of responsibility for its continued existence, interest in the subject declined. For twenty years previous to the founding of Garrison's *Liberator* in 1831, organized abolition movements had been almost unknown in New England. In various ways the people were isolated, separated from contact with slavery. Their knowledge of this subject of discussion was academic, theoretical, acquired at second-hand.

In New York and New Jersey slaves were much more numerous than in New England. There were still slaves in considerable numbers until about 1825. The people had a knowledge of the institution from experience and observation, and there



was no break in the continuity of their organized abolition societies. Chief among the objects of these societies was the effort to prevent kidnapping and to guard the rights of free negroes. For both of these purposes there was a continuous call for activity. Pennsylvania also had freedmen of her own whose rights called for guardianship, as well as many freedmen from farther south who had come into the State.

The movement of protest and protection did not stop at Mason and Dixon's Line, but extended far into the South. In both North Carolina and Tennessee an active protest against slavery was at all times maintained. In this great middle section of the country, between New England and South Carolina, there was no cessation in the conflict between free and slave labor. Some of these States became free while others remained slave; but between the people of the two sections there was continuous communication. Slaveholders came into free States to liberate their slaves. Non-slaveholders came to get rid of the competition of slave labor, and free negroes came to avoid reënslavement. Slaves fled thither on their way to liberty. It was not a matter of choice; it was an unavoidable condition which compelled the people of the

border States to give continuous attention to the institution of slavery.

The modern anti-slavery movement had its origin in this great middle section, and from the same source it derived its chief support. The great body of active abolitionists were from the slave States or else derived their inspiration from personal contact with slavery. As compared with New England abolitionists, the middle-state folk were less extreme in their views. They had a keener appreciation of the difficulties involved in emancipation. They were more tolerant towards the idea of letting the country at large share the burdens involved in the liberation of the slaves. Border-state abolitionists naturally favored the policy of gradual emancipation which had been followed in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Abolitionists who continued to reside in the slave States were forced to recognize the fact that emancipation involved serious questions of race adjustment. From the border States came the colonization society, a characteristic institution, as well as compromise of every variety.

The southernmost section, including South Carolina, Georgia, and the Gulf States, was even more sharply defined in the attitude it assumed toward

the anti-slavery movement. At no time did the cause of emancipation become formidable in this section. In all these States there was, of course, a large class of non-slaveholding whites, who were opposed to slavery and who realized that they were victims of an injurious system; but they had no effective organ for expression. The ruling minority gained an early and an easy victory and to the end held a firm hand. To the inhabitants of this section it appeared to be a self-evident truth that the white race was born to rule and the black race was born to serve. Where negroes outnumbered the whites fourfold, the mere suggestion of emancipation raised a race question which seemed appalling in its proportions. Either in the Union or out of the Union, the rulers were determined to perpetuate slavery.

Slavery as an economic institution became dependent upon a few semitropical plantation crops. When the Constitution was framed, rice and indigo, produced in South Carolina and Georgia, were the two most important. Indigo declined in relative importance, and the production of sugar was developed, especially after the annexation of the Louisiana Purchase. But by far the most important crop for its effects upon slavery and upon the

entire country was cotton. This single product finally absorbed the labor of half the slaves of the entire country. Mr. Rhodes is not at all unreasonable in his surmise that, had it not been for the unforeseen development of the cotton industry, the expectation of the founders of the Republic that slavery would soon disappear would actually have been realized.

It was more difficult to carry out a policy of emancipation when slaves were quoted in the market at a thousand dollars than when the price was a few hundred dollars. All slave-owners felt richer; emancipation appeared to involve a greater sacrifice. Thus the cotton industry went far towards accounting for the changed attitude of the entire country on the subject of slavery. The North as well as the South became financially interested.

It was not generally perceived before it actually happened that the border States would take the place of Africa in furnishing the required supply of laborers for Southern plantations. The interstate slave-trade gave to the system a solidarity of interest which was new. All slave-owners became partakers of a common responsibility for the system as a whole. It was the newly developed trade

quite as much as the system of slavery itself which furnished the ground for the later anti-slavery appeal. The consciousness of a common guilt for the sin of slavery grew with the increase of actual interstate relations.

The abolition of the African slave-trade was an act of the general Government. Congress passed the prohibitory statute in 1807, to go into effect in January, 1808. At no time, however, was the prohibition entirely effective, and a limited illegal trade continued until slavery was eventually abolished. This inefficiency of restraint furnished another point of attack for the abolitionists. Through efforts to suppress the African slave-trade, the entire country became conscious of a common responsibility. Before the Revolutionary War, Great Britain had been censured for forcing cheap slaves from Africa upon her unwilling colonies. After the Revolution, New England was blamed for the activity of her citizens in this nefarious trade both before and after it was made illegal. All of this tended to increase the sense of responsibility in every section of the country. Congress had made the foreign slave-trade illegal; and citizens in all sections gradually became aware of the possibility that Congress might

likewise restrict or forbid interstate commerce in slaves.

The West Indies and Mexico were also closely associated with the United States in the matter of slavery. When Jamestown was founded, negro slavery was already an old institution in the islands of the Caribbean Sea, and thence came the first slaves to Virginia. The abolition of slavery in the island of Hayti, or San Domingo, was accomplished during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. As incidental to the process of emancipation, the Caucasian inhabitants were massacred or banished, and a republican government was established, composed exclusively of negroes and mulattoes. From the date of the Missouri Compromise to that of the Mexican War, this island was united under a single republic, though it was afterwards divided into the two republics of Hayti and San Domingo.

The "horrors of San Domingo" were never absent from the minds of those in the United States who lived in communities composed chiefly of slaves. What had happened on the island was accepted by Southern planters as proof that the two races could live together in peace only under the relation of master and slave, and that emancipation

boded the extermination of one race or the other. Abolitionists, however, interpreted the facts differently: they emphasized the tyranny of the white rulers as a primary cause of the massacres; they endowed some of the negro leaders with the highest qualities of statesmanship and self-sacrificing generosity; and Wendell Phillips, in an impassioned address which he delivered in 1861, placed on the honor roll above the chief worthies of history — including Cromwell and Washington — Toussaint L'Ouverture, the liberator of Hayti, whom France had betrayed and murdered.

Abolitionists found support for their position in the contention that other communities had abolished slavery without such accompanying horrors as occurred in Hayti and without serious race conflict. Slavery had run its course in Spanish America, and emancipation accompanied or followed the formation of independent republics. In 1833 all slaves in the British Empire were liberated, including those in the important island of Jamaica. So it happened that, just at the time when Southern leaders were making up their minds to defend their peculiar institution at all hazards, they were beset on every side by the spirit of emancipation. Abolitionists, on the other hand, were fully convinced

that the attainment of some form of emancipation in the United States was certain, and that, either peaceably or through violence, the slaves would ultimately be liberated.



## CHAPTER III

### EARLY CRUSADERS

AT the time when the new cotton industry was enhancing the value of slave labor, there arose from the ranks of the people those who freely consecrated their all to the freeing of the slave. Among these, Benjamin Lundy, a New Jersey Quaker, holds a significant place.

Though the Society of Friends fills a large place in the anti-slavery movement, its contribution to the growth of the conception of equality is even more significant. This impetus to the idea arises from a fundamental Quaker doctrine, announced at the middle of the seventeenth century, to the effect that God reveals Himself to mankind, not through any priesthood or specially chosen agents; not through any ordinance, form, or ceremony; not through any church or institution; not through any book or written record of any sort; but directly, through His Spirit, to each person. This direct

enlightening agency they deemed coextensive with humanity; no race and no individual is left without the ever-present illuminating Spirit. If men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, what they spoke or wrote can furnish no reliable guidance to the men of a later generation, except as their minds also are enlightened by the same Spirit in the same way. "The letter killeth; it is the Spirit that giveth life."

This doctrine in its purity and simplicity places all men and all races on an equality; all are alike ignorant and imperfect; all are alike in their need of the more perfect revelation yet to be made. Master and slave are equal before God; there can be no such relation, therefore, except by doing violence to a personality, to a spiritual being. In harmony with this fundamental principle, the Society of Friends early rid itself of all connection with slavery. The Friends' Meeting became a refuge for those who were moved by the Spirit to testify against slavery.

Born in 1789 in a State which was then undergoing the process of emancipating its slaves, Benjamin Lundy moved at the age of nineteen to Wheeling, West Virginia, which had already become the center of an active domestic slave-

trade. The pious young Quaker, now apprenticed to a saddler, was brought into personal contact with this traffic in human flesh. He felt keenly the national disgrace of the iniquity. So deep did the iron enter into his soul that never again did he find peace of mind except in efforts to relieve the oppressed. Like hundreds and thousands of others, Lundy was led on to active opposition to the trade by an actual knowledge of the inhumanity of the business as prosecuted before his eyes and by his sympathy for human suffering.

His apprenticeship ended, Lundy was soon established in a prosperous business in an Ohio village not far from Wheeling. Though he now lived in a free State, the call of the oppressed was ever in his ears and he could not rest. He drew together a few of his neighbors, and together they organized the Union Humane Society, whose object was the relief of those held in bondage. In a few months the society numbered several hundred members, and Lundy issued an address to the philanthropists of the whole country, urging them to unite in like manner with uniform constitutions, and suggesting that societies so formed adopt a policy of correspondence and coöperation. At

about the same time, Lundy began to publish anti-slavery articles in the Mount Pleasant *Philanthropist* and other papers.

In 1819 he went on a business errand to St. Louis, Missouri, where he found himself in the midst of an agitation over the question of the extension of slavery in the States. With great zest he threw himself into the discussion, making use of the newspapers in Missouri and Illinois. Having lost his property, he returned poverty-stricken to Ohio, where he founded in January, 1821, the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. A few months later he transferred his paper to the more congenial atmosphere of Jonesborough, Tennessee, but in 1824 he went to Baltimore, Maryland. In the meantime, Lundy had become much occupied in traveling, lecturing, and organizing societies for the promotion of the cause of abolition. He states that during the ten years previous to 1830 he had traveled upwards of twenty-five thousand miles, five thousand of which were on foot. He now became interested in plans for colonizing negroes in other countries as an aid to emancipation, though he himself had no confidence in the colonization society and its scheme of deportation to Africa. After leading a few negroes to Hayti in

1829, he visited Canada, Texas, and Mexico with a similar plan in view.

During a trip through the Middle States and New England in 1828, Lundy met William Lloyd Garrison, and the following year he walked all the way from Baltimore to Bennington, Vermont, for the express purpose of securing the assistance of the youthful reformer as coeditor of his paper. Garrison had previously favored colonization, but within the few weeks which elapsed before he joined Lundy, he repudiated all forms of colonization and advocated immediate and unconditional emancipation. He at once told Lundy of his change of views. "Well," said Lundy, "thee may put thy initials to thy articles, and I will put my witness to mine, and each will bear his own burden." The two editors were, however, in complete accord in their opposition to the slave-trade. Lundy had suffered a dangerous assault at the hands of a Baltimore slave-trader before he was joined by Garrison. During the year 1830, Garrison was convicted of libel and thrown into prison on account of his scathing denunciation of Francis Todd of Massachusetts, the owner of a vessel engaged in the slave-trade.

These events brought to a crisis the publication

of the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. The editors now parted company. Again Lundy moved the office of the paper, this time to Washington, D. C., but it soon became a peripatetic monthly, printed wherever the editor chanced to be. In 1836 Lundy began the issue of an anti-slavery paper in Philadelphia, called the *National Inquirer*, and with this was merged the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. He was preparing to resume the issue of his original paper under the old title, in La Salle County, Illinois, when he was overtaken by death on August 22, 1839.

Here was a man without education, without wealth, of a slight frame, not at all robust, who had undertaken, singlehanded and without the shadow of a doubt of his ultimate success, to abolish American slavery. He began the organization of societies which were to displace the anti-slavery societies of the previous century. He established the first paper devoted exclusively to the cause of emancipation. He foresaw that the question of emancipation must be carried into politics and that it must become an object of concern to the general Government as well as to the separate States. In the early part of his career he found the most congenial association and the larger measure of effective

support south of Mason and Dixon's Line, and in this section were the greater number of the abolition societies which he organized. During the later years of his life, as it was becoming increasingly difficult in the South to maintain a public anti-slavery propaganda, he transferred his chief activities to the North. Lundy serves as a connecting link between the earlier and the later anti-slavery movements. Eleven years of his early life belong to the century of the Revolution. Garrison recorded his indebtedness to Lundy in the words: "If I have in any way, however humble, done anything towards calling attention to slavery, or bringing out the glorious prospect of a complete jubilee in our country at no distant day, I feel that I owe everything in this matter, instrumentally under God, to Benjamin Lundy."

Different in type, yet even more significant on account of its peculiar relations to the cause of abolition, was the life of James Gillespie Birney, who was born in a wealthy slaveholding family at Dansville, Kentucky, in the year 1792. The Birneys were anti-slavery planters of the type of Washington and Jefferson. The father had labored to make Kentucky a free State at the time of its admission to the Union. His son was educated

first at Princeton, where he graduated in 1810, and then in the office of a distinguished lawyer in Philadelphia. He began the practice of law at his home at the age of twenty-two. His home training and his residence in States which were then in the process of gradual emancipation served to confirm him in the traditional conviction of his family. While Benjamin Lundy, at the age of twenty-seven, was engaged in organizing anti-slavery societies north of the Ohio River, Birney at the age of twenty-four was influential as a member of the Kentucky Legislature in the prevention of the passing of a joint resolution calling upon Ohio and Indiana to make laws providing for the return of fugitive slaves. He was also conspicuous in his efforts to secure provisions for gradual emancipation. Two years later he became a planter near Huntsville, Alabama. Though not a member of the Constitutional Convention preparatory to the admission of this Territory into the Union, Birney used his influence to secure provisions in the constitution favorable to gradual emancipation. As a member of the first Legislature, in 1819, he was the author of a law providing a fair trial by jury for slaves indicted for crimes above petty larceny, and in 1826 he became a regular contributor to the American



Colonization Society, believing it to be an aid to emancipation. The following year he was able to induce the Legislature, although he was not then a member of it, to pass an act forbidding the importation of slaves into Alabama either for sale or for hire. This was regarded as a step preliminary to emancipation.

The cause of education in Alabama had in Birney a trusted leader. During the year 1830 he spent several months in the North Atlantic States for the selection of a president and four professors for the State University and three teachers for the Huntsville Female Seminary. These were all employed upon his sole recommendation. On his return he had an important interview with Henry Clay, of whose political party he had for several years been the acknowledged leader in Alabama. He urged Clay to place himself at the head of the movement in Kentucky for gradual emancipation. Upon Clay's refusal their political coöperation terminated. Birney never again supported Clay for office and regarded him as in a large measure responsible for the pro-slavery reaction in Kentucky.

Birney, who had now become discouraged regarding the prospect of emancipation, during the winter of 1831 and 1832 decided to remove his

family to Jacksonville, Illinois. He was deterred from carrying out his plan, however, by his unexpected appointment as agent of the colonization society in the Southwest—a mission which he undertook from a sense of duty.

In his travels throughout the region assigned to him, Birney became aware of the aggressive designs of the planters of the Gulf States to secure new slave territories in the Southwest. In view of these facts the methods of the colonization society appeared utterly futile. Birney surrendered his commission and, in 1833, returned to Kentucky with the intention of doing himself what Henry Clay had refused to do three years earlier, still hoping that Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee might be induced to abolish slavery and thus place the slave power in a hopeless minority. His disappointment was extreme at the pro-slavery reaction which had taken place in Kentucky. The condition called for more drastic measures, and Birney decided to forsake entirely the colonization society and cast in his lot with the abolitionists. He freed his slaves in 1834, and in the following year he delivered the principal address at the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society held in New York. His gift of leadership

was at once recognized. As vice-president of the society he began to travel on its behalf, to address public assemblies, and especially to confer with members of state legislatures and to address the legislative bodies. He now devoted his entire time to the service of the society, and as early as September, 1835, issued the prospectus of a paper devoted to the cause of emancipation. This called forth such a display of force against the movement that he could neither find a printer nor obtain the use of a building in Dansville, Kentucky, for the publication. As a result he transferred his activities to Cincinnati, where he began publication of the *Philanthropist* in 1836. With the connivance of the authorities and encouragement from leading citizens of Cincinnati, the office of the *Philanthropist* was three times looted by the mob, and the proprietor's life was greatly endangered. The paper, however, rapidly grew in favor and influence and thoroughly vindicated the right of free discussion of the slavery question. Another editor was installed when Birney, who became secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1837, transferred his residence to New York City.

Twenty-three years before Lincoln's famous utterance in which he proclaimed the doctrine that

a house divided against itself cannot stand, and before Seward's declaration of an irrepressible conflict between slavery and freedom, Birney had said: "There will be no cessation of conflict until slavery shall be exterminated or liberty destroyed. Liberty and slavery cannot live in juxtaposition." He spoke out of the fullness of his own experience. A thoroughly trained lawyer and statesman, well acquainted with the trend of public sentiment in both North and South, he was fully persuaded that the new pro-slavery crusade against liberty boded civil war. He knew that the white men in North and South would not, without a struggle, consent to be permanently deprived of their liberties at the behest of a few Southern planters. Being himself of the slaveholding class, he was peculiarly fitted to appreciate their position. To him the new issue meant war, unless the belligerent leaders should be shown that war was hopeless. By his moderation in speech, his candor in statement, his lack of rancor, his carefully considered, thoroughly fair arguments, he had the rare faculty of convincing opponents of the correctness of his own view.

There could be little sympathy between Birney and William Lloyd Garrison, whose style of denunciation appeared to the former as an incitement

to war and an excuse for mob violence. As soon as Birney became the accepted leader in the national society, there was friction between his followers and those of Garrison. To denounce the Constitution and repudiate political action were, from Birney's standpoint, a surrender of the only hope of forestalling a dire calamity. He had always fought slavery by the use of legal and constitutional methods, and he continued so to fight. In this policy he had the support of a large majority of abolitionists in New England and elsewhere. Only a few personal friends accepted Garrison's injunction to forswear politics and repudiate the Constitution.

The followers of Birney, failing to secure recognition for their views in either of the political parties, organized the Liberty party and, while Birney was in Europe in 1840, nominated him as their candidate for the Presidency. The vote which he received was a little over seven thousand, but four years later he was again the candidate of the party and received over sixty thousand votes. He suffered an injury during the following year which condemned him to hopeless invalidism and brought his public career to an end.

Though Lundy and Birney were contemporaries

and were engaged in the same great cause, they were wholly independent in their work. Lundy addressed himself almost entirely to the non-slaveholding class, while all of Birney's early efforts were those of a slaveholder seeking to induce his own class to support the policy of emancipation. Though a Northern man, Lundy found his chief support in the South until he was driven out by persecution. Birney also resided in the South until he was forced to leave for the same reason. The two men were in general accord in their main lines of policy: both believed firmly in the use of political means to effect their objects; both were at first colonizationists, though Lundy favored colonization in adjacent territory rather than by deportation to Africa.

Women were not a whit behind men in their devotion to the cause of freedom. Conspicuous among them were Sarah and Angelina Grimké, born in Charleston, South Carolina, of a slaveholding family noted for learning, refinement, and culture. Sarah was born in the same year as James G. Birney, 1792; Angelina was thirteen years younger. Angelina was the typical crusader: her sympathies from the first were with the slave. As

a child she collected and concealed oil and other simple remedies so that she might steal out by night and alleviate the sufferings of slaves who had been cruelly whipped or abused. At the age of fourteen she refused to be confirmed in the Episcopal Church because the ceremony involved giving sanction to words which seemed to her untrue. Two years later her mother offered her a present of a slave girl for a servant and companion. This gift she refused to accept, for in her view the servant had a right to be free, and, as for her own needs, Angelina felt quite capable of waiting upon herself.

Of her own free will she joined the Presbyterian Church and labored earnestly with the officers of the church to induce them to espouse the cause of the slave. When she failed to secure coöperation, she decided that the church was not Christian and she therefore withdrew her membership. Her sister Sarah had gone North in 1821 and had become a member of the Society of Friends in Philadelphia. In Charleston, South Carolina, there was a Friends' meeting-house where two old Quakers still met at the appointed time and sat for an hour in solemn silence. Angelina donned the Quaker garb, joined this meeting, and for an entire year was the third

of the silent worshipers. This quiet testimony, however, did not wholly satisfy her energetic nature, and when, in 1830, she heard of the imprisonment of Garrison in Baltimore, she was convinced that effective labors against slavery could not be carried on in the South. With great sorrow she determined to sever her connection with home and family and join her sister in Philadelphia. There the exile from the South poured out her soul in an *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South*. The manuscript was handed to the officers of the Anti-Slavery Society in the city and, as they read, tears filled their eyes. The *Appeal* was immediately printed in large quantities for distribution in Southern States.

Copies of the *Appeal* which had been sent to Charleston were seized by a mob and publicly burned. When it became known soon afterwards that the author of the offensive document was intending to return to Charleston to spend the winter with her family, there was intense excitement, and the mayor of the city informed the mother that her daughter would not be permitted to land in Charleston nor to communicate with any one there, and that, if she did elude the police and come ashore, she would be imprisoned and guarded until



the departure of the next boat. On account of the distress which she would cause to her friends, Miss Grimké reluctantly gave up the exercise of her constitutional right to visit her native city and in a very literal sense she became a permanent exile.

The two sisters let their light shine among Philadelphia Quakers. In the religious meetings negro women were consigned to a special seat. The Grimkés, having first protested against this discrimination, took their own places on the seat with the colored women. In Charleston, Angelina had scrupulously adhered to the Quaker garb because it was viewed as a protest against slavery. In Philadelphia, however, no such meaning was attached to the costume, and she adopted clothing suited to the climate regardless of conventions. A series of parlor talks to women which had been organized by the sisters grew in interest until the parlors became inadequate, and the speakers were at last addressing large audiences of women in the public meeting-places of Philadelphia.

At this time when Angelina was making effective use of her unrivaled power as a public speaker, she received in 1836 an invitation from the Anti-Slavery Society of New York to address the women of that city. She informed her sister that she

believed this to be a call from God and that it was her duty to accept. Sarah decided to be her companion and assistant in the work in the new field, which was similar to that in Philadelphia. Its fame soon extended to Boston, whence came an urgent invitation to visit that city. It was in Massachusetts that men began to steal into the women's meetings and listen from the back seats. In Lynn all barriers were broken down, and a modest, refined, and naturally diffident young woman found herself addressing immense audiences of men and women. In the old theater in Boston for six nights in succession, audiences filling all the space listened entranced to the messenger of emancipation. There is uniform testimony that, in an age distinguished for oratory, no more effective speaker appeared than Angelina Grimké. It was she above all others who first vindicated the right of women to speak to men from the public platform on political topics. But it must be remembered that scores of other women were laboring to the same end and were fully prepared to utilize the new opportunity.

The great world movement from slavery towards freedom, from despotism to democracy, is characterized by a tendency towards the equality of the

sexes. Women have been slaves where men were free. In barbarous ages women have been ignored or have been treated as mere adjuncts to the ruling sex. But wherever there has been a distinct contribution to the cause of liberty there has been a distinct recognition of woman's share in the work. The Society of Friends was organized on the principle that men and women are alike moral beings, hence are equal in the sight of God. As a matter of experience, women were quite as often moved to break the silence of a religious meeting as were the men.

For two hundred years women had been accustomed to talk to both men and women in Friends' meetings and, when the moral war against slavery brought religion and politics into close relation, they were ready speakers upon both topics. When the Grimké sisters came into the church with a fresh baptism of the Spirit, they overcame all obstacles and, with a passion for righteousness, moral and spiritual and political, they carried the war against slavery into politics.

In 1833, at the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia, a number of women were present. Lucretia Mott, a distinguished "minister" in the Society of Friends, took

part in the proceedings. She was careful to state that she spoke as a mere visitor, having no place in the organization, but she ventured to suggest various modifications in the report of Garrison's committee on a declaration of principles which rendered it more acceptable to the meeting. It had not then been seriously considered whether women could become members of the Anti-Slavery Society, which was at that time composed exclusively of men, with the women maintaining their separate organizations as auxiliaries.

The women of the West were already better organized than the men and were doing a work which men could not do. They were, for the most part, unconscious of any conflict between the peculiar duties of men and those of women in their relations to common objects. The "library associations" of Indiana, which were in fact effective anti-slavery societies, were to a large extent composed of women. To the library were added numerous other disguises, such as "reading circles," "sewing societies," "women's clubs." In many communities the appearance of men in any of these enterprises would create suspicion or even raise a mob. But the women worked on quietly, effectively, and unnoticed.

The matron of a family would be provided with the best riding-horse which the neighborhood could furnish. Mounted upon her steed, she would sally forth in the morning, meet her carefully selected friends in a town twenty miles away, gain information as to what had been accomplished, give information as to the work in other parts of the district, distribute new literature, confer as to the best means of extending their labors, and return in the afternoon. The father of such a family was quite content with the humbler task of coöperation by supplying the sinews of war. There was complete equality between husband and wife because their aims were identical and each rendered the service most convenient and most needed. Women did what men could not do. In the territory of the enemy the men were reached through the gradual and tentative efforts of women whom the uninitiated supposed to be spending idle hours at a sewing circle. Interest was maintained by the use of information of the same general character as that which later took the country by storm in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In course of time all disguise was thrown aside. A public speaker of national reputation would appear, a meeting would be announced, and a rousing abolition speech would

be delivered; the mere men of the neighborhood would have little conception how the surprising change had been accomplished.

On rare occasions the public presentation of the anti-slavery view would be undertaken prematurely, as in 1840 at Pendleton, Indiana, when Frederick Douglass attempted to address a public meeting and was almost slain by missiles from the mob. Pendleton, however, was not given over to the enemy. The victim of the assault was restored to health in the family of a leading citizen. The outrage was judiciously utilized to convince the fair-minded that one of the evils of slavery was the development of minds void of candor and justice. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Pendleton disturbance there was another great meeting in the town. Frederick Douglass was the hero of the occasion. The woman who was the head of the family that restored him to health was on the platform. Some of the men who threw the brickbats were there to make public confession and to apologize for the brutal deed.

In the minds of a few persons of rare intellectual and logical endowment, democracy has always implied the equality of the sexes. From the time of the French Revolution there have been advocates

of this doctrine. As early as 1820, Frances Wright, a young woman in Scotland having knowledge of the Western republic founded upon the professed principles of liberty and equality, came to America for the express purpose of pleading the cause of equal rights for women. To the general public her doctrine seemed revolutionary, threatening the very foundations of religion and morality. In the midst of opposition and persecution she proclaimed views respecting the rights and duties of women which today are generally accepted as axiomatic.

The women who attended the meetings for the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society were not suffragists, nor had they espoused any special theories respecting the position of women. They did not wish to be members of the men's organizations but were quite content with their own separate one, which served its purpose very well under prevailing local conditions. James G. Birney, the candidate of the Liberty party for the Presidency in 1840, had good reasons for opposition to the inclusion of men and women in the same organization. He knew that by acting separately they were winning their way. The introduction of a novel theory involving a different issue seemed to him likely to be a source of weakness.

The cause of women was, however, gaining ground and winning converts. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were delegates to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention at London. They listened to the debate which ended in the refusal to recognize them as members of the Convention because they were women. The tone of the discussion convinced them that women were looked upon by men with disdain and contempt. Because the laws of the land and the customs of society consigned women to an inferior position, and because there would be no place for effective public work on the part of women until these laws were changed, both these women became advocates of women's rights and conspicuous leaders in the initiation of the propaganda. The Reverend Samuel J. May, of Syracuse, New York, preached a sermon in 1845 in which he stated his belief that women need not expect to have their wrongs fully redressed until they themselves had a hand in the making and in the administration of the laws. This is an early suggestion that equal suffrage would become the ultimate goal of the efforts for righting women's wrongs.

At the same time there were accessions to the cause from a different source. In 1833 Oberlin



College was founded in northern Ohio. Into some of the first classes there women were admitted on equal terms with men. In 1835 the trustees offered the presidency to Professor Asa Mahan, of Lane Seminary. He was himself an abolitionist from a slave State, and he refused to be President of Oberlin College unless negroes were admitted on equal terms with other students. Oberlin thus became the first institution in the country which extended the privileges of the higher education to both sexes of all races. It was a distinctly religious institution devoted to radical reforms of many kinds. Not only was the use of all intoxicating beverages discarded by faculty and students but the use of tobacco as well was discouraged.

Within fifteen years after the founding of Oberlin, there were women graduates who had something to say on numerous questions of public interest. Especially was this true of the subject of temperance. Intemperance was a vice peculiar to men. Women and children were the chief sufferers, while men were the chief sinners. It was important, therefore, that men should be reached. In 1847 Lucy Stone, an Oberlin graduate, began to address public audiences on the subject. At the same time Susan B. Anthony appeared as a temperance

lecturer. The manner of their reception and the nature of their subject induced them to unite heartily in the pending crusade for the equal rights of women. The three causes thus became united in one.

Along with the crusade against slavery, intemperance, and women's wrongs, arose a fourth, which was fundamentally connected with the slavery question. Quakers and Southern and Western abolitionists were ardently devoted to the interests of peace. They would abolish slavery by peaceable means because they believed the alternative was a terrible war. To escape an impending war they were nerved to do and dare and to incur great risks. New England abolitionists who labored in harmony with those of the West and South were actuated by similar motives. Sumner first gained public notice by a distinguished oration against war. Garrison went farther: he was a professional non-resistant, a root and branch opponent of both war and slavery. John Brown was a fanatical antagonist of war until he reached the conclusion that according to the Divine Will there should be a short war of liberation in place of the continuance of slavery, which was itself in his opinion the most cruel form of war.

Slavery as a legally recognized institution disappeared with the Civil War. The war against intemperance has made continuous progress and this problem is apparently approaching a solution. The war against war as a recognized institution has become the one all-absorbing problem of civilization. The war against the wrongs of women is being supplanted by efforts to harmonize the mutual privileges and duties of men and women on the basis of complete equality. As Samuel May predicted more than seventy years ago, in the future women are certain to take a hand both in the making and in the administration of law.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TURNING-POINT

THE year 1831 is notable for three events in the history of the anti-slavery controversy: on the first day of January in that year William Lloyd Garrison began in Boston the publication of the *Liberator*; in August there occurred in Southampton, Virginia, an insurrection of slaves led by a negro, Nat Turner, in which sixty-one white persons were massacred; and in December the Virginia Legislature began its long debate on the question of slavery.

On the part of the abolitionists there was at no time any sudden break in the principles which they advocated. Lundy did nothing but revive and continue the work of the Quakers and other non-slaveholding classes of the revolutionary period. Birney was and continued to be a typical slaveholding abolitionist of the earlier period. Garrison began his work as a disciple of Lundy, whom

he followed in the condemnation of the African colonization scheme, though he went farther and rejected every form of colonization. Garrison likewise repudiated every plan for gradual emancipation and proclaimed the duty of immediate and unconditional liberation of the slaves.

The first number of the *Liberator* contained an *Address to the Public*, which sounded the keynote of Garrison's career. "I shall contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population — I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice on this subject — I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation — I am in earnest — I will not equivocate — I will not retreat a single inch, and *I will be heard!*"

The New England Anti-Slavery Society, of which Garrison was the chief organizer, was in essential harmony with the societies which Lundy had organized in other sections. Its first address to the public in 1833 distinctly recognized the separate States as the sole authority in the matter of emancipation within their own boundaries. Through moral suasion, eschewing all violence and sedition, its authors proposed to secure their object. In the spirit of civil and religious liberty and by appealing to the Declaration of Independence,

to the spirit and letter of the Constitution, they exhorted the entire people to become an effective anti-slavery society. At the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society a year later, the division of power between the separate States and the general Government, which found final expression in the platform of the Republican party in 1856, was recognized in its constitution, and in a declaration of principles written by Garrison himself occur the words: "We also maintain that there are, at the present time, the highest obligations resting upon the people of the free States to remove slavery by moral and political action, as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States." All the abolitionists were united on the main lines of policy. In 1835 Garrison, in the *Liberator*, called God to witness that "we are not hostile to the Constitution of the United States." It was many years before Garrison applied to the cause of abolition the peculiar doctrine of non-resistance and philosophic anarchy in such a way as to separate himself and his few followers from the great body of abolitionists. Not until 1843 did he place at the head of his paper the words: "The compact which exists between the North and the South is a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell — involv-

ing both parties in atrocious criminality and should be immediately annulled." Eleven years later he publicly burned a copy of the Constitution in the streets of Boston, crying aloud, "So perish all compromisers with tyranny."

In the meantime a division had arisen among New England abolitionists, and at the annual meeting of the national society in New York in 1840 the opponents of Garrison withdrew and organized the American and "Foreign" Anti-Slavery Society. The disagreement arose partly from a dispute over the question of the admission of women to membership, but chiefly because of Garrison's changing attitude towards participation in politics. Garrison's branch retained the old name and was designated as the "Old Society." It was in fact, however, a brand-new society proclaiming doctrines and advocating policies in direct contradiction to those of the original organization. Probably not one in a hundred of even the New England abolitionists ever accepted the special views which the Garrisonian organization adopted after 1843.

The facts that Garrison himself had a leading part in formulating the principles and policies for political action which received new emphasis by

the Liberty party of 1840 and 1844, by the Free-soil party of 1848, and later by the Republican party, and that nearly all of the abolitionists continued to be faithful adherents to those principles, are sufficient proof of the essential unity of the great anti-slavery movement. The apparent lack of harmony and the real confusion in the history of the subject arose from the peculiar character of one remarkable man.

The few owners of slaves who had assumed the rôle of public defenders of the institution were in the habit of using violent and abusive language against anti-slavery agitators. This appeared in the first debate on the subject during Washington's administration. Every form of rhetorical abuse also accompanied the outbreak of mob violence against the reformers at the time of Garrison's advent into the controversy. He was especially fitted to reply in kind. "I am accused," said he, "of using hard language. I admit the charge. I have not been able to find a soft word to describe villainy, or to identify the perpetrator of it." This was a new departure which was instantly recognized by Southern leaders. But from the beginning to the bitter end, Garrison stands alone as preëminently the representative of this form of



attack. It was significant, also, that the *Liberator* was published in Boston, the literary center of the country.

There is no evidence that there was any direct connection between the publication of the *Liberator* and the servile insurrection which occurred during the following August.<sup>1</sup> It was, however, but natural that the South should associate the two events. A few utterances of the paper were fitted, if not intended, to incite insurrection. One passage reads: "Whenever there is a contest between the oppressed and the oppressor — the weapons being equal between the parties — God knows that my heart must be with the oppressed, and always against the oppressor. Therefore, whenever commenced, I cannot but wish success to all slave insurrections." Again: "Rather than see men wearing their chains in a cowardly and servile spirit, I would, as an advocate of peace, much rather see them breaking the heads of the tyrant with their chains."

George Thompson, an English colaborer with

<sup>1</sup> Garrison himself denied any direct connection with the Nat Turner insurrection. See *William Lloyd Garrison, the Story of His Life told by His Children*, vol. 1, p. 251.

Garrison, is quoted as saying in a public address in 1835 that "Southern slaves ought, or at least had a right, to cut the throats of their masters."<sup>1</sup> Such utterances are rare, and they express a passing mood not in the least characteristic of the general spirit of the abolition movement; yet the fact that such statements did emanate from such a source made it comparatively easy for extremists of the opposition to cast odium upon all abolitionists. The only type of abolition known in South Carolina was that of the extreme Garrisonian agitators, and it furnished at least a shadow of excuse for mob violence in the North and for complete suppression of discussion in the South. To encourage slaves to cut the throats of their masters was far from being a rhetorical figure of speech in communities where slaves were in the majority. Santo Domingo was at the time a prosperous republic founded by former slaves who had exterminated the Caucasian residents of the island. Negroes from Santo Domingo had fomented insurrection in South Carolina. The Nat Turner incident was more than a suggestion of the dire possibilities of the situation. Turner was a trusted slave, a

<sup>1</sup> Schouler, *History of the United States under the Constitution*, vol. v, p. 217.

preacher among the blacks. He succeeded in concealing his plot for weeks. When the massacre began, slaves not in the secret were induced to join. A majority of the slain were women and children. Abolitionists who had lived in slave States never indulged in flippant remarks fitted to incite insurrection. This was reserved for the few agitators far removed from the scene of action.

Southern planters who had determined at all hazards to perpetuate the institution of slavery were peculiarly sensitive on account of what was taking place in Spanish America and in the British West Indies. Mexico abolished slavery in 1829, and united with Colombia in encouraging Cuba to throw off the Spanish yoke, abolish slavery, and join the sisterhood of New World republics. This led to an effective protest on the part of the United States. Both Spain and Mexico were advised that the United States could not with safety to its own interests permit the emancipation of slaves in the island of Cuba. But with the British Emancipation Act of 1833, Cuba became the only neighboring territory in which slavery was legal. These acts of emancipation added zeal to the determination of the Southern planters to secure territory for the indefinite extension of slavery to the southwest.

When Lundy and Birney discovered these plans, their desire to husband and extend the direct political influence of abolitionists was greatly stimulated. To this end they maintained a moderate and conservative attitude. They took care that no abuse or misrepresentation should betray them into any expression which would diminish their influence with fair-minded, reasonable men. They were convinced that a clear and complete revelation of the facts would lead a majority of the people to adopt their views.

The debate in the Virginia Legislature in the session which met three months after the Southampton massacre furnishes a demonstration that the traditional anti-slavery sentiment still persisted among the rulers of the Old Dominion. It arose out of a petition from the Quakers of the State asking for an investigation preparatory to a gradual emancipation of the slaves. The debate, which lasted for several weeks, was able and thorough. No stronger utterances in condemnation of slavery were ever voiced than appear in this debate. Different speakers made the statement that no one presumed to defend slavery on principle — that apologists for slavery existed but no defenders.

Opposition to the petition was in the main apologetic in tone.

A darker picture of the blighting effects of slavery on the industries of the country was never drawn than appears in these speeches. Slavery was declared to be driving free laborers from the State, to have already destroyed every industry except agriculture, and to have exhausted the soil so that profitable agriculture was becoming extinct, while pine brush was encroaching upon former fruitful fields. "Even the wolf," said one, "driven back long since by the approach of man, now returns, after the lapse of a hundred years, to howl over the desolations of slavery." Contrasts between free labor in northern industry and that of the South were vividly portrayed. In a speech of great power, one member referred to Kentucky and Ohio as States "providentially designated to exhibit in their future histories the differences which necessarily result from a country free from, and a country afflicted with the curse of slavery."

The debate was by no means confined to industrial or material considerations. McDowell, who was afterwards elected Governor of the State, thus portrays the personal relations of master and slave: "You may place the slave where you please — you

may put him under any process, which, without destroying his value as a slave, will debase and crush him as a rational being — you may do all this, and the idea that he was born to be free will survive it all. It is allied to his hope of immortality — it is the ethereal part of his nature which oppression cannot reach — it is a torch lit up in his soul by the hand of the Deity, and never meant to be extinguished by the hand of man.”

Various speakers assumed that the continuance of slavery involved a bloody conflict; that either peaceably or through violence, slavery as contrary to the spirit of the age must come to an end; that the agitation against it could not be suppressed. Faulkner drew a lurid picture of the danger from servile insurrection, in which he referred to the utterances of two former speakers, one of whom had said that, unless something effective was done to ward off the danger, “the throats of all the white people of Virginia will be cut.” The other replied, “No, the whites cannot be conquered — the throats of the blacks will be cut.” Faulkner’s rejoinder was that the difference was a trifling one, “for the fact is conceded that one race or the other must be exterminated.”

The public press joined in the debate. Leading

editorials appeared in the *Richmond Enquirer* urging that effective measures be instituted to put an end to slavery. The debate aroused much interest throughout the South. Substantially all the current abolition arguments appeared in the speeches of the slave-owning members of the Virginia Legislature. And what was done about it? Nothing at all. The petition was not granted; no action looking towards emancipation was taken. This was indeed a turning-point. Men do not continue to denounce in public their own conduct unless their action results in some effort toward corrective measures.

Professor Thomas Dew, of the chair of history and metaphysics in William and Mary College and later President of the College, published an essay reviewing the debate in the Legislature and arguing that any plan for emancipation in Virginia was either undesirable or impossible. This essay was among the first of the direct pro-slavery arguments. Statements in support of the view soon followed. In 1835 the Governor of South Carolina in a message to the Legislature said, "Domestic slavery is the corner-stone of our republican edifice." Senator Calhoun, speaking in the Senate two years later, declared slavery to be a positive good.

W. G. Simms, Southern poet and novelist, writing in 1852, felicitates himself as being among the first who about fifteen years earlier advocated slavery as a great good and a blessing. Harriet Martineau, an English author who traveled extensively in the South in 1835, found few slaveholders who justified the institution as being in itself just. But after the debates in the Virginia Legislature, there were few owners of slaves who publicly advocated abolition. The spirit of mob violence had set in, and, contrary to the utterances of Virginia statesmen, free speech on the subject of slavery was suppressed in the slave States. This did not mean that Southern statesmen had lost the power to perceive the evil effects of slavery or that they were convinced that their former views were erroneous. It meant simply that they had failed to agree upon a policy of gradual emancipation, and the only recourse left seemed to be to follow the example of James G. Birney and leave the South or to submit in silence to the new order.



## CHAPTER V

### THE VINDICATION OF LIBERTY

WITH the changed attitude of the South towards emancipation there was associated an active hostility to dearly bought human liberty. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of worship, the right of assembly, trial by jury, the right of petition, free use of the mails, and numerous other fundamental human rights were assailed. Birney and other abolitionists who had immediate knowledge of slavery early perceived that the real question at issue was quite as much the continued liberty of the white man as it was the liberation of the black man and that the enslavement of one race involved also the ultimate essential enslavement of the other.

In 1831 two slave States and six free States still extended to free negroes the right to vote. During the pro-slavery crusade these privileges disappeared; and not only so, but free negroes were

banished from certain States, or were not permitted to enter them, or were allowed to remain only by choosing a white man for a guardian. It was made a crime to teach negroes, whether slaves or free men, to read and write. Under various pretexts free negroes were reduced to slavery. Freedom of worship was denied to negroes, and they were not allowed to assemble for any purpose except under the strict surveillance of white men. Negro testimony in a court of law was invalid where the rights of a white man were involved. The right of a negro to his freedom was decided by an arbitrary court without a jury, while the disputed right of a white man to the ownership of a horse was conditioned by the safeguard of trial by jury.

The maintenance of such policies carries with it of necessity the suppression of free discussion. When Southern leaders adopted the policy of defending slavery as a righteous institution, abolitionists in the South either emigrated to the North or were silenced. In either case they were deprived of a fundamental right. The spirit of persecution followed them into the free States. Birney could not publish his paper in Kentucky, nor even at Cincinnati, save at the risk of his life.

Elijah Lovejoy was not allowed to publish his paper in Missouri, and, when he persisted in publishing it in Illinois, he was brutally murdered. Even in Boston it required men of courage and determination to meet and organize an anti-slavery society in 1832, though only a few years earlier Benjamin Lundy had traveled freely through the South itself delivering anti-slavery lectures and organizing scores of such societies. The New York Anti-Slavery Society was secretly organized in 1832 in spite of the opposition of a determined mob. Mob violence was everywhere rife. Meetings were broken up, negro quarters attacked, property destroyed, murders committed.

Fair-minded men became abolitionists on account of the crusade against the rights of white men quite as much as from their interest in the rights of negroes. Salmon P. Chase of Ohio was led to espouse the cause by observing the attacks upon the freedom of the press in Cincinnati. Gerrit Smith witnessed the breaking up of an anti-slavery meeting in Utica, New York, and thereafter consecrated his time, his talents, and his great wealth to the cause of liberty. Wendell Phillips saw Garrison in the hands of a Boston mob, and that experience determined him to make common

cause with the martyr. And the murder of Lovejoy in 1837 made many active abolitionists.

It is difficult to imagine a more inoffensive practice than giving to negro girls the rudiments of an education. Yet a school for this purpose, taught by Miss Prudence Crandall in Canterbury, Connecticut, was broken up by persistent persecution, a special act of the Legislature being passed for the purpose, forbidding the teaching of negroes from outside the State without the consent of the town authorities. Under this act Miss Crandall was arrested, convicted, and imprisoned.

Having eliminated free discussion from the South, the Southern States sought to accomplish the same object in the North. In pursuance of a resolution of the Legislature, the Governor of Georgia offered a reward of five thousand dollars to any one who should arrest, bring to trial, and prosecute to conviction under the laws of Georgia the editor of the *Liberator*. R. G. Williams, publishing agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society, was indicted by a grand jury of Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, and Governor Gayle of Alabama made a requisition on Governor Marcy of New York for his extradition. Williams had never been in Alabama. His offense consisted in publishing in the

New York *Emancipator* a few rather mild utterances against slavery.

Governor McDuffie of South Carolina in an official message declared that slavery was the very corner-stone of the republic, adding that the laboring population of any country, "bleached or unbleached," was a dangerous element in the body politic, and predicting that within twenty-five years the laboring people of the North would be virtually reduced to slavery. Referring to abolitionists, he said: "The laws of every community should punish this species of interference with death without benefit of clergy." Pursuant to the Governor's recommendation, the Legislature adopted a resolution calling upon non-slaveholding States to pass laws to suppress promptly and effectively all abolition societies. In nearly all the slave States similar resolutions were adopted, and concerted action against anti-slavery effort was undertaken. During the winter of 1835 and 1836, the Governors of the free States received these resolutions from the South and, instead of resenting them as an uncalled-for interference with the rights of free commonwealths, they treated them with respect. Edward Everett, Governor of Massachusetts, in his message presenting the Southern

documents to the Legislature, said: "Whatever by direct and necessary operation is calculated to excite an insurrection among the slaves has been held, by highly respectable legal authority, an offense against this Commonwealth which may be prosecuted as a misdemeanor at common law." Governor Marcy of New York, in a like document, declared that "without the power to pass such laws the States would not possess all the necessary means for preserving their external relations of peace among themselves." Even before the Southern requests reached Rhode Island, the Legislature had under consideration a bill to suppress abolition societies.

When a committee of the Massachusetts Legislature had been duly organized to consider the documents received from the slave States, the abolitionists requested the privilege of a hearing before the committee. Receiving no reply, they proceeded to formulate a statement of their case; but before they could publish it, they were invited to appear before the joint committee of the two houses. The public had been aroused by the issue and there was a large audience. The case for the abolitionists was stated by their ablest speakers, among whom was William Lloyd Garrison. They

labored to convince the committee that their utterances were not incendiary, and that any legislative censure directed against them would be an encouragement to mob violence and the persecution which was already their lot. After the defensive arguments had been fully presented, William Goodell took the floor and proceeded to charge upon the Southern States which had made these demands a conspiracy against the liberties of the North. In the midst of great excitement and many interruptions by the chairman of the committee, he quoted the language of Governor McDuffie's message, and characterized the documents lying on the table before him as "fetters for Northern freemen." Then, turning to the committee, he began, "Mr. Chairman, are you prepared to attempt to put them on?" — but the sentence was only half finished when the stentorian voice of the chairman interrupted him: "Sit down, sir!" and he sat down. The committee then arose and left the room. But the audience did not rise; they waited till other abolitionists found their tongues and gave expression to a fixed determination to uphold the liberties purchased for them by the blood of their fathers. The Massachusetts Legislature did not comply with the request of Governor McDuffie of

South Carolina to take the first step towards the enslavement of all laborers, white as well as black. And Rhode Island refused to enact into law the pending bill for the suppression of anti-slavery societies. They declined to violate the plain requirements of their Constitution that the interests of slavery might be promoted. Not many years later they were ready to strain or break the Constitution for the sake of liberty.

In the general crusade against liberty churches proved more pliable than States. The authority of nearly all the leading denominations was directed against the abolitionists. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church passed in 1836 a resolution censuring two of their members who had lectured in favor of modern abolitionism. The Ohio Conference of the same denomination had passed resolutions urging resistance to the anti-slavery movement. In June, 1836, the New York Conference decided that no one should be chosen as deacon or elder who did not give pledge that he would refrain from agitating the church on the subject.

The same spirit appeared in theological seminaries. The trustees of Lane Seminary, near Cincinnati, Ohio, voted that students should not



organize or be members of anti-slavery societies or hold meetings or lecture or speak on the subject. Whereupon the students left in a body, and many of the professors withdrew and united with others in the founding of an anti-slavery college at Oberlin.

A persistent attack was also directed against the use of the United States mails for the distribution of anti-slavery literature. Mob violence which involved the post-office began as early as 1830, when printed copies of Miss Grimké's *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* were seized and burned in Charleston. In 1835 large quantities of anti-slavery literature were removed from the Charleston office and in the presence of the assembled citizens committed to the flames. Postmasters on their own motion examined the mails and refused to deliver any matter that they deemed incendiary. Amos Kendall, Postmaster-General, was requested to issue an order authorizing such conduct. He replied that he had no legal authority to issue such an order. Yet he would not recommend the delivery of such papers. "We owe," said he, "an obligation to the laws, but a higher one to the communities in which we live, and if the former be perverted to destroy the latter, it is patriotism to disregard them. Entertaining these views, I

cannot sanction, and will not condemn, the step you have taken." This is an early instance of the appeal to the "higher law" in the pro-slavery controversy. The higher law was invoked against the freedom of the press. The New York postmaster sought to dissuade the Anti-Slavery Society from the attempt to send its publications through the mails into Southern States. In reply to a request for authorization to refuse to accept such publications, the Postmaster-General replied: "I am deterred from giving an order to exclude the whole series of abolition publications from the Southern mails only by a want of legal power, and if I were situated as you are, I would do as you have done."

Mr. Kendall's letters to the postmasters of Charleston and New York were written in July and August, 1835. In December of the same year, presumably with full knowledge that a member of his Cabinet was encouraging violations of law in the interest of slavery, President Jackson undertook to supply the need of legal authorization. In his annual message he made a savage attack upon the abolitionists and recommended to Congress the "passing of such a law as will prohibit, under severe penalties, the circulation in the Southern

States, through the mail, of incendiary publications.”

This part of the President's message was referred to a select committee, of which John C. Calhoun was chairman. The chairman's report was against the adoption of the President's recommendation because a subject of such vital interest to the States ought not to be left to Congress. The admission of the right of Congress to decide what is incendiary, asserted the report, carries with it the power to decide what is not incendiary and hence Congress might authorize and enforce the circulation of abolition literature through the mails in all the States. The States should themselves severally decide what in their judgment is incendiary, and then it would become the duty of the general Government to give effect to such state laws. The bill recommended was in harmony with this view. It was made illegal for any deputy postmaster “to deliver to any person whatsoever, any pamphlet, newspaper, handbill, or other printed paper, or pictorial representation touching the subject of slavery, where by the laws of the said State, territory, or district their circulation is prohibited.” The bill was defeated in the Senate by a small margin. Altogether there was an enlightening

debate on the whole subject. The exposure of the abuse of tampering with the mail created a general reaction, which enabled the abolitionists to win a spectacular victory. Instead of a law forbidding the circulation of anti-slavery publications, Congress enacted a law requiring postal officials under heavy penalties to deliver without discrimination all matter committed to their charge. This act was signed by President Jackson, and Calhoun himself was induced to admit that the purposes of the abolitionists were not violent and revolutionary. Henceforth abolitionists enjoyed their full privileges in the use of the United States mail.

An even more dramatic victory was thrust upon the abolitionists by the inordinate violence of their opponents in their attack upon the right of petition. John Quincy Adams, who became their distinguished champion, was not himself an abolitionist. When, as a member of the lower House of Congress in 1831, he presented petitions from certain citizens of Pennsylvania, presumably Quakers, requesting Congress to abolish slavery and the slave-trade in the District of Columbia, he refused to countenance their prayer, and expressed the wish that the memorial might be referred without

debate. At the very time when a New England ex-President was thus advising abolitionists to desist from sending petitions to Congress, the Virginia Legislature was engaged in the memorable debate upon a similar petition from Virginia Quakers, in which most radical abolition sentiment was expressed by actual slave-owners. Adams continued to present anti-slavery memorials and at the same time to express his opposition to the demands of the petitioners. When in 1835 there arose a decided opposition to the reception of such documents, Adams, still in apparent sympathy with the pro-slavery South on the main issue, gave wise counsel on the method of dealing with petitions. They should be received, said he, and referred to a committee; because the right of petition is sacred. This, he maintained, was the best way to avoid disturbing debate on the subject of slavery. He quoted his own previous experience; he had made known his opposition to the purposes of the petitioners; their memorials were duly referred to a committee and there they slept the sleep of death. At that time only one voice had been raised in the House in support of the abolition petitioners, that of John Dickson of New York, who had delivered a speech of two hours in length advocating their

cause; but not a voice was raised in reply. Mr. Adams mentioned this incident with approval. The way to forestall disturbing debate in Congress, he said, was scrupulously to concede all constitutional rights and then simply to refrain from speaking on the subject.

This sound advice was not followed. For several months a considerable part of the time of the House was occupied with the question of handling abolition petitions. And finally, in May, 1836, the following resolution passed the House: "*Resolved*, That all petitions, memorials, resolutions, propositions, or papers relating in any way or to any extent whatever to the subject of slavery or the abolition of slavery, shall, without being either printed or referred, be laid on the table, and that no further action whatever shall be had thereon." This is commonly known as the "gag resolution." During four successive years it was reënacted in one form or another and was not repealed by direct vote until 1844.

When the name of Mr. Adams was called in the vote upon the passage of the above resolution, instead of answering in the ordinary way, he said: "I hold the resolution to be a direct violation of the Constitution of the United States, of the rules

of this House, and of the rights of my constituents." This was the beginning of the duel between the "old man eloquent" and a determined majority in the House of Representatives. Adams developed undreamed-of resources as a debater and parliamentarian. He made it his special business to break down the barrier against the right of petition. Abolitionists coöperated with zeal in the effort. Their champion was abundantly supplied with petitions. The gag resolution was designed to prevent all debate on the subject of slavery. Its effect in the hands of the shrewd parliamentarian was to foment debate. On one occasion, with great apparent innocence, after presenting the usual abolition petitions, Adams called the attention of the Speaker to one which purported to be signed by twenty-two slaves and asked whether such a petition should be presented to the House, since he was himself in doubt as to the rules applicable in such a case. This led to a furious outbreak in the House which lasted for three days. Adams was threatened with censure at the bar of the House, with expulsion, with the grand jury, with the penitentiary; and it is believed that only his great age and national repute shielded him from personal violence. After numerous passionate speeches had been

delivered, Adams injected a few important corrections into the debate. He reminded the House that he had not presented a petition purporting to emanate from slaves; on the contrary, he had expressly declined to present it until the Speaker had decided whether a petition from slaves was covered by the rule. Moreover, the petition was not against slavery but in favor of slavery. He was then charged with the crime of trifling with the sensibilities of the House; and finally the champion of the right of petition took the floor in his own defense. His language cut to the quick. His calumniators were made to feel the force of his biting sarcasm. They were convicted of injustice, and all their resolutions of censure were withdrawn. The victory was complete.

After the year 1838 John Quincy Adams had the effective support of Joshua R. Giddings from the Western Reserve, Ohio — who also fought a pitched battle of his own which illustrates another phase of the crusade against liberty. The ship *Creole* had sailed from Baltimore to New Orleans in 1841 with a cargo of slaves. The negroes mutinied on the high seas, slew one man, gained possession of the vessel, sailed to Nassau, and were there set free by the British Government. Prolonged diplomatic



negotiations followed in which our Government held that, as slaves were property in the United States, they continued to be such on the high seas. In the midst of the controversy, Giddings introduced a resolution into the House, declaring that slavery, being an abridgment of liberty, could exist only under local rules, and that on the high seas there can be no slavery. For this act Giddings was arraigned and censured by the House. He at once resigned, but was reëlected with instructions to continue the fight for freedom of debate in the House.

In the campaign against the rights of freemen mob violence was first employed, but in the South the weapon of repressive legislation was soon substituted, and this was powerfully supplemented by social and religious ostracism. Except in a few districts in the border States, these measures were successful. Public profession of abolitionism was suppressed. The violence of the mob was of much longer duration in the North and reached its height in the years 1834 and 1835. But Northern mobs only quickened the zeal of the abolitionists and made converts to their cause. The attempt to substitute repressive state legislation had the same effect, and the use of church authority for making

an end of the agitation for human liberty was only temporarily influential.

As early as 1838 the Presbyterian Church was divided over questions of doctrine into Old School and New School Presbyterians. This served to forestall the impending division on the slavery question. The Old School in the South became pro-slavery and the New School in the North became anti-slavery. At the same time the Methodist Church of the entire country was beset by a division on the main question. In 1844 Southern Methodist Episcopalian conferences resolved upon separation and committed themselves to the defense of slavery. The division in the Methodist Church was completed in 1846. A corresponding division took place in the Baptist Church in 1845. The controversy was dividing the country into a free North and an enslaved South, and Southern white men as well as negroes were threatened with subjection to the demands of the dominant institution.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SLAVERY ISSUE IN POLITICS

SOME who opposed mob violence became active abolitionists; others were led to defend the rights of abolitionists because to do otherwise would encourage anarchy and general disorder. The same was true of those who defended the right of petition and the free use of the mails and the entire list of the fundamental rights of freemen which were threatened by the crusade against abolitionists. Birney's contention that unless the slave is freed no one can be free was thus vindicated: the issue involved vastly more than the mere emancipation of slaves.

The attack made in defense of slavery upon the rights of freemen was early recognized as involving civil war unless peaceable emancipation could be attained. So soon as John Quincy Adams faced the new spirit in Congress, he was convinced that it meant probable war. As early as May, 1836, he

warned the South, saying: "From the instant that your slaveholding States become the theater of war, civil, servile, or foreign, from that moment the war powers of the Constitution extend to interference with the institution of slavery." This sentiment he reiterated and amplified on various occasions. The South was duly warned that an attempt to disrupt the Union would involve a war of which emancipation would be one of the consequences. With the exception of Garrison and a few of his personal followers, abolitionists were unionists: they stood for the perpetual union of the States.

This is not the place to give an extended account of the Mexican War.<sup>1</sup> There are, however, certain incidents connected with the annexation of Texas and the resulting war which profoundly affected the crusade against slavery. Both Lundy and Birney in their missions to promote emancipation through the process of colonization believed that they had unearthed a plan on the part of Southern leaders to acquire territory from Mexico for the purpose of extending slavery. This discovery coincided with the suppression of abolition propaganda in the South. Hitherto John Quincy Adams

<sup>1</sup> See *Texas and the Mexican War* (in *The Chronicles of America*).

had favored the western expansion of our territory. He had labored diligently to make the Rio Grande the western boundary of the Louisiana Purchase at the time of the treaty with Spain in 1819. But though in 1825 he had supported a measure to purchase Texas from Mexico, under the new conditions he threw himself heartily against the annexation of Texas, and in 1838 he defeated in the House of Representatives a resolution favoring annexation. To this end Adams occupied the morning hour of the House each day from the 16th of June to the 7th of July, within two days of the time fixed for adjournment. This was only a beginning of his fight against the extension of slavery. There was no relenting in his opposition to pro-slavery demands until he was stricken down with paralysis in the streets of Boston, in November, 1846. He never again addressed a public assembly. But he continued to occupy his seat in Congress until February 23, 1848.

The debate inaugurated in Congress by Adams and others over the extension of slave territory rapidly spread to the country at large, and interest in the question became general. Abolitionists were thereby greatly stimulated to put into practice their professed duty of seeking to accomplish

their ends by political action. Their first effort was to secure recognition in the regular parties. The Democrats answered in their platform of 1840 by a plank specifically denouncing the abolitionists, and the Whigs proved either noncommittal or unfriendly. The result was that abolitionists organized a party of their own in 1840 and nominated James G. Birney for the Presidency. Both of the older parties during this campaign evaded the issue of the annexation of Texas. In 1844 the Whigs again refrained from giving in their platform any official utterance on the Texas issue, though they were understood to be opposed to annexation. The Democrats adroitly asserted in their platform their approval of the *re*-annexation of Texas and *re*-occupation of Oregon. There was a shadowy prior claim to both these regions, and by combining them in this way the party avoided any odious partiality towards the acquisition of slave territory. But the voters in both parties had become interested in the specific question whether the country was to enter upon a war of conquest whose primary object should be the extension of slavery. In the North it became generally understood that a vote for Henry Clay, the Whig candidate, was an expression of opposition to annexation. This issue,

however, was not made clear in the South. In the absence of telegraph and daily paper it was quite possible to maintain contradictory positions in different sections of the country. But since the Democrats everywhere openly favored annexation, the election of their candidate, James K. Polk, was generally accepted as a popular approval of the annexation of Texas. Indeed, action immediately followed the election and, before the President-elect had been inaugurated, the joint resolution for the annexation of Texas passed both Houses of Congress.

The popular vote was almost equally divided between Whigs and Democrats. Had the vote for Birney, who was again the candidate of the Liberty party, been cast for Clay electors, Clay would have been chosen President. The Birney vote was over sixty-two thousand. The Liberty party, therefore, held the balance of power and determined the result of the election.

The Liberty party has often been censured for defeating the Whigs at this election of 1844. But many incidents, too early forgotten by historians, go far to justify the course of the leaders. Birney and Clay were at one time members of the same party. They were personal friends, and as slave-

holders they shared the view that slavery was a menace to the country and ought to be abolished. It was just fourteen years before this election that Birney made a visit to Clay to induce him to accept the leadership of an organized movement to abolish slavery in Kentucky. Three years later, when Birney returned to Kentucky to do himself what Henry Clay had refused to do, he became convinced that the reaction which had taken place in favor of slavery was largely due to Clay's influence. This was a common impression among active abolitionists. It is not strange, therefore, that they refused to support him as a candidate for the Presidency, and it is not at all certain that his election in 1844 would have prevented the war with Mexico.

Northern Whigs accused the Democrats of fomenting a war with Mexico with the intention of gaining territory for the purpose of extending slavery. Democrats denied that the annexation of Texas would lead to war, and many of them proclaimed their opposition to the farther extension of slavery. In harmony with this sentiment, when President Polk asked for a grant of two million dollars to aid in making a treaty with Mexico, they attached to the bill granting the amount a proviso



to the effect that slavery should forever be prohibited in any territory which might be obtained from Mexico by the contemplated treaty. The proviso was written by an Ohio Democrat and was introduced in the House by David A. Wilmot, a Pennsylvania Democrat, after whom it is known. It passed the House by a fair majority with the support of both Whigs and Democrats. At the time of the original introduction in August, 1846, the Senate did not vote upon the measure. Davis of Massachusetts moved its adoption but inadvertently prolonged his speech in its favor until the hour for adjournment. Hence there was no vote on the subject. Subsequently the proviso in a new form again passed the House but failed of adoption in the Senate.

During the war the Wilmot Proviso was the subject of frequent debate in Congress and of continuous debate throughout the country until the treaty with Mexico was signed in 1848. A vast territory had been acquired as a result of the war, and no decision had been reached as to whether it should remain free or be opened to settlement by slave-owners. Another presidential election was at hand. For fully ten years there had been ever-increasing excitement over the question of the

limitation or the extension of slavery. This had clearly become the topic of supreme interest throughout the country, and yet the two leading parties avoided the issue. Their own membership was divided. Northern Democrats, many of them, were decidedly opposed to slavery extension. Southern Whigs with equal intensity favored the extension of slavery into the new territory. The platforms of the two parties were silent on the subject. The Whigs nominated Taylor, a Southern general who had never voted their party ticket, but they made no formal declaration of principles. The Democrats repeated with colorless additions their platforms of 1840 and 1844 and sought to win the election with a Northern man, Lewis Cass of Michigan, as candidate.

There was, therefore, a clear field for a party having fully defined views to express on a topic of commanding interest. The cleavage in the Democratic party already begun by the debate over the Wilmot Proviso was farther promoted by a factional division of New York Democrats. Martin Van Buren became the leader of the liberal faction, the "Barnburners," who nominated him for President at a convention at Utica. The spirit of independence now seized disaffected Whigs and

Democrats everywhere in the North and Northwest. Men of anti-slavery proclivities held non-partizan meetings and conventions. The movement finally culminated in the famous Buffalo convention which gave birth to the Free-soil party. The delegates of all political persuasions united on the one principle of opposition to slavery. They adopted a ringing platform closing with the words: "*Resolved*, That we inscribe on our banner 'Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor, and Free Men,' and under it will fight on, and fight ever, until a triumphant victory shall reward our exertions." They accepted Van Buren as their candidate. The vote at the ensuing election was more than fourfold that given to Birney in 1844. The Van Buren supporters held the balance of power between Whigs and Democrats in twelve States. Taylor was elected by the vote of New York, which except for the division in the party would have gone to Cass. There was no longer any doubt of the fact that a political force had arisen which could no longer be ignored by the ruling parties. One of the parties must either support the new issue or give place to a party which would do so.

A political party for the defense of liberty was the fulfillment of the aspirations of all earnest

anti-slavery men and of all abolitionists not of the radical Garrisonian persuasion. The national anti-slavery societies were for the most part limited in their operations to the Atlantic seaboard. The West organized local and state associations with little reference to the national association. When the disruption occurred between Garrison and his opponents in 1840, the Western abolitionists continued their former methods of local organization. They recognized no divisions in their ranks and continued to work in harmony with all who in any way opposed the institution of slavery. The political party was their first really effective national organization. Through party committees, caucuses, and conventions, they became a part of the forces that controlled the nation. The older local clubs and associations were either displaced by the party or became mere adjuncts to the party.

The lines for political action were now clearly defined. In the States emancipation should be accomplished by state action. With a few individual exceptions the leaders conceded that Congress had no power to abolish slavery in the States. Upon the general Government they urged the duty of abolishing both slavery and the slave-trade in the District of Columbia and in all areas under

direct federal control. They further urged upon the Government the strict enforcement of the laws prohibiting the foreign slave-trade and the enactment of laws forbidding the interstate slave-trade. The constitutionality of these main lines of action has been generally conceded.

Abolitionists were pioneers in the formulation of political platforms. The declaration of principles drawn up by Garrison in 1833 and adopted by the American Anti-Slavery Society was of the nature of a political platform. The duty of voting in furtherance of the policy of emancipation was inculcated. No platform was adopted for the first political campaign, that of 1840; but four years later there was an elaborate party platform of twenty-one resolutions. Many things had happened in the eleven years intervening since the declaration of principles of the American Anti-Slavery Society. In the earlier platform the freedom of the slave appears as the primary object. That of the Liberty party assumes the broad principle of human brotherhood as the foundation for a democracy or a republic. It denies that the party is organized merely to free the slave. Slaveholding as the grossest form of despotism must indeed be attacked first, but the aim of the party is to carry

the principle of equal rights into all social relations. It is not a sectional party nor a party organized for a single purpose. "It is not a new party, nor a third party, but it is the party of 1776, reviving the principles of that memorable era, and striving to carry them into practical application." The spirit of '76 rings, indeed, throughout the document, which declares that it was understood at the time of the Declaration and the Constitution that the existence of slavery was in derogation of the principles of American liberty. The implied faith of the Nation and the States was pledged to remove this stain upon the national character. Some States had nobly fulfilled that pledge; others shamelessly had neglected to do so.

These principles are reasserted in succeeding platforms. The later opponents of slavery in their principles and policies thus allied themselves with the founders of the republic. They claimed the right to continue to repeat the words of Washington and Jefferson and those of the members of the Virginia Legislature of 1832. No new doctrines were required. It was enough simply to reaffirm the fundamental principles of democracy.

The names attached to the party are significant. It was at first popularly styled the Abolition party,

then officially in turn the Liberty party, the Free-soil party, and finally the Republican party. Republican was the name first applied to the Democratic party — the party of Jefferson. The term Democrat was gradually substituted under the leadership of Jackson before 1830. Some of the men who participated in the organization of the later Republican party had themselves been Republicans in the party of Jefferson. They not only accepted the name which Jefferson gave to his party, but they adopted the principles which Jefferson proclaimed on the subject of slavery, free soil, and human rights in general. This was the final stage in the identification of the later anti-slavery crusade with the earlier contest for liberty.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PASSING OF THE WHIG PARTY

THE middle of the last century was marked by many incidents which have left a permanent impress upon politics in general and upon the slavery question in particular. Europe was again in the throes of popular uprisings. New constitutions were adopted in France, Switzerland, Prussia, and Austria. Reactions in favor of autocracy in Austria and Germany sent multitudes of lovers of liberty to America. Kossuth, the Hungarian revolutionist, electrified American audiences by his appeals on behalf of the downtrodden in Europe. Already the world was growing smaller. America did not stop at the Pacific but crossed the ocean to establish permanent political and commercial relations with Japan and China.

The industries of the country were being reorganized to meet new conditions created by recent inventions. The electric telegraph was just coming



into use, giving rise to a new era in communication. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 was followed by competing projects to construct railroads to the Pacific with Chicago and St. Louis as the rival eastern terminals. The telegraph, the railway, and the resulting industrial development proved great nationalizing influences. They served also to give increased emphasis to the contrast between the industries of the free and those of the slave States. The Census of 1850 became an effective anti-slavery argument.

The telegraph also gave new life to the public press. The presidential campaign of 1848 was the last one in which it was possible to carry on contradictory arguments in support of the same candidate. If slavery could not endure the test of untrammelled discussion when there were no means of rapid intercommunication such as the telegraph supplied, how could it contend against the revelations of the daily press with the new type of reporter and interviewer which was now developed?

It is a remarkable coincidence that in the midst of the passing of the old and the coming in of the new order there should be a change in the political leadership of the country. Webster, Clay, Calhoun, John Quincy Adams, not to mention others,

all died near the middle of the century, and their political power passed to younger men. Adams gave his blessing to a young friend and colaborer, William H. Seward of New York, intimating that he expected him to do much to curb the threatening power of the slaveholding oligarchy; while Andrew Jackson, who died earlier, had already conferred a like distinction upon young Stephen A. Douglas. There was no lack of aspirants for the fallen mantles.

John C. Calhoun continued almost to the day of his death to modify his interpretation of the Constitution in the interest of his section. As a young man he avowed protectionist principles. Becoming convinced that slave labor was not suited to manufacture, he urged South Carolina to declare the protective tariff laws null and void within her limits. When his section seemed endangered by the distribution of anti-slavery literature through the mail, he extemporized a theory that each State had a right to pass statutes to protect itself in such an emergency, in which case it became the duty of the general Government and of all other States to respect such laws. When it finally appeared that the territory acquired from Mexico was likely to remain free, the same statesman made further

discoveries. He found that Congress had no right to exclude slavery from any Territory belonging to the United States; that the owners of slaves had equal rights with the owners of other property; that neither Congress nor a territorial authority had any power to exclude slaves from a Territory. This doctrine was accepted by extremists in the South and was finally embodied in the Dred Scott decision of 1857.

Abolitionists had meantime evolved a precisely contradictory theory. They asserted that the Constitution gave no warrant for property in man, except as held under state laws; that with this exception freedom was guaranteed to all; that Congress had no more right to make a slave than it had to make a king; and that it was the duty of Congress to maintain freedom in all the Territories. Extremists expressed the view that all past acts whereby slavery had been extended were unconstitutional and therefore void. Between these extreme conflicting views was every imaginable grade of opinion. The prevailing view of opponents of slavery, however, was in harmony with their past conduct and maintained that Congress had complete control over slavery in the Territories.

When the Mexican territory was acquired,

Stephen A. Douglas, as the experienced chairman of the Committee on Territories in the Senate, was already developing a theory respecting slavery in the Territories which was destined to play a leading part in the later crusade against slavery. Douglas was the most thorough-going of expansionists and would acknowledge no northern boundary on this side of the North Pole, no southern boundary nearer than Panama. He regarded the United States, with its great principle of local autonomy, as fitted to become eventually the United States of the whole world, while he held it to be an immediate duty to make it the United States of North America. As the son-in-law of a Southern planter in North Carolina, and as the father of sons who inherited slave property, Douglas, although born in Vermont, knew the South as did no other Northern statesman. He knew also the institution of slavery at first hand. As a pronounced expansionist and as the congressional leader in all matters pertaining to the Territories, he acquired detailed information as to the qualities of these new possessions, and he spoke, therefore, with a good degree of authority when he said, "If there was one inch of territory in the whole of our acquisitions from Mexico where slavery could exist,

it was in the valleys of the Sacramento and the San Joaquin." But this region was at once preempted for freedom upon the discovery of gold.

Douglas did not admit that even the whole of Texas would remain dedicated to slavery. Some of the States to be formed from it would be free, by the same laws of climate and resources which determined that the entire West would remain free. Before the Mexican War the Senator had become convinced that the extension of slavery had reached its limit; that the Missouri Compromise was a dead letter except as a psychological palliative; that Nature had already ordained that slave labor should be forever excluded from all Western territory both north and south of that line. His reply to Calhoun's contention that a balance must be maintained between slave and free States was that he had plans for forming seventeen new States out of the vast Western domains, every one of which would be free. And besides, said he, "we all look forward with confidence to the time when Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, and probably North Carolina and Tennessee will adopt a gradual system of emancipation." Douglas was one of the first to favor the admission of California as a free State. According to the

Missouri Compromise law and the laws of Mexico, all Western territory was free, and he was opposed to interference with existing conditions. The Missouri Compromise was still held sacred. Finally, however, it was with Douglas's assistance that the Compromise measures of 1850 were passed, one of which provided for territorial Governments for Utah and New Mexico with the proviso that, when admitted as States, slavery should be permitted or prohibited as the citizens of those States should determine at the time. Congress refrained from any declaration as to slavery in the Territories. It was this policy of "non-intervention" which four years later furnished plausible excuse for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise.

It was not strange that there was general ignorance in all parts of the country as to the resources of the newly acquired territory. The rush to the goldfields precipitated action in respect to California. Before General Taylor, the newly elected President, was inaugurated, there was imminent need of an efficient government. An early act of the Administration was to send an agent to assist in the formation of a state Government, and a convention was immediately called to frame a constitution. By unanimous vote of the convention,

slavery was excluded. The constitution was approved by popular vote and was presented to Congress for final acceptance in December, 1849.

In the meantime a great commotion had arisen among the people. Southern state legislatures passed resolutions demanding that the rights of their peculiar institution should be recognized in the new Territory. Northern legislatures responded with resolutions favoring the admission of California as a State and the application of the Wilmot Proviso to the remaining territory. Northern Democrats had very generally denied that the affair with Mexico had as a chief purpose the extension of slavery. Democrats therefore united with Whigs in maintaining the principle of free soil. In the South there was a corresponding fusion of the two parties in support of the sectional issue.

General concern prevailed as to the attitude of the Administration. Taylor's election had been effected by both a Southern and a Northern split in the Democratic party. Northern Democrats had voted for the Free-soil candidate because of the alleged pro-slavery tendencies of their own party. Southern Democrats voted for Taylor because of their distrust of Lewis Cass, their own candidate. Some

of these met in convention and formally nominated Taylor, and Taylor accepted their nomination with thanks. Northern anti-slavery Whigs had a difficult task to keep their members in line. There is evidence that Taylor held the traditional Southern view that the anti-slavery North was disposed to encroach upon the rights of the South. Meeting fewer Northern Whig supporters, he became convinced that the more active spirit of encroachment was in the pro-slavery South. California needed a state Government, and the President took the most direct method to supply that need. As the inhabitants were unanimous in their desire to exclude slavery, their wish should be respected. New Mexico was in a similar situation. As slavery was already excluded from the territory under Mexican law, and as there was no wish on the part of the inhabitants to introduce slavery, the President recognized existing facts and made no change. When Southern leaders projected a scheme to enlarge the boundaries of Texas so as to extend slavery over a large part of New Mexico, President Taylor set a guard of United States troops to maintain the integrity of the Territory. When a deputation of Southern Whigs endeavored to dissuade him from his purpose, threatening a dissolution of



the Union and intimating that army officers would refuse to act against citizens of Texas, the soldier President replied that in such an event he would take command in person and would hang any one caught in acts of treason. When Henry Clay introduced an elaborate project for a compromise between the North and the South, the President insisted that each question should be settled on its own merits and directed the forces of the Administration against any sort of compromise. The debate over Clay's Omnibus Bill was long and acrimonious. On July 4, 1850, the President seemed triumphant. But upon that day, notwithstanding his apparent robust health, he was stricken down with an acute disease and died five days later. With his passing, the opposing Whig faction came into power. The so-called compromise measures were at length one by one passed by Congress and approved by President Fillmore.

California was admitted as a free State; but as a palliative to the South, Congress passed bills for the organization of territorial Governments for New Mexico and Utah without positive declarations regarding the powers of the territorial Legislatures over slavery. All questions relating to title to slaves were to be left to the courts. Meantime it

was left in doubt whether Mexican law excluding slavery was still in force. Southern malcontents maintained that this act was a mere hoax, using words which suggested concession when no concession was intended. Northern anti-slavery men criticized the act as the entering wedge for another great surrender to the enemy. Because of the uncertainty regarding the meaning of the law and the false hopes likely to be created, they maintained that it was fitted to foment discord and prolong the period of distrust between the two sections. At all events such was its actual effect.

A third act in this unhappy series gave to Texas ten millions of dollars for the alleged surrender of claims to a part of New Mexico. This had little bearing on the general subject of compromise; yet anti-slavery men criticized it on the ground that the issue raised was insincere; that the appropriation was in fact a bribe to secure votes necessary to pass the other measures; that the bill was passed through Congress by shameless bribery, and that even the boundaries conceded to Texas involved the surrender of free territory.

The abolition of the slave-trade in the District of Columbia was supported by both sections of the country. The removal of the slave pens within

sight of the Capitol to a neighboring city deprived the abolitionists of one of their weapons for effective agitation, but it did not otherwise affect the position of slavery.

Of the five acts included in the compromise measures, the one which provided for the return of fugitive slaves was most effective in the promotion of hostility between the two sections. During the six months of debate on the Omnibus Bill, numerous bills were presented to take the place of the law of 1793. Webster brought forward a bill which provided for the use of a jury to establish the validity of a claim to an escaped slave. But that which was finally adopted by a worn-out Congress is characterized as one of the most barbarous pieces of legislation ever enacted by a civilized country. A single incident may indicate the nature of the act. James Hamlet, for three years a resident of New York City, a husband and a father and a member of the Methodist Church, was seized eight days after the law went into effect by order of the agent of Mary Brown of Baltimore, cut off from all communication with his friends, hurried before a commissioner, and on *ex parte* testimony was delivered into the hands of the agent, by whom he was handcuffed and secretly conveyed to Baltimore.

Mr. Rhodes accounts for the enactment in the following words: "If we look below the surface we shall find a strong impelling motive of the Southern clamor for this harsh enactment other than the natural desire to recover lost property. Early in the session it took air that a part of the game of the disunionists was to press a stringent fugitive slave law, for which no Northern man could vote; and when it was defeated, the North would be charged with refusal to carry out a stipulation of the Constitution. . . . The admission of California was a bitter pill for the Southern ultras, but they were forced to take it. The Fugitive Slave Law was a taunt and a reproach to that part of the North where the anti-slavery sentiment ruled supremely, and was deemed a partial compensation." Clay expressed surprise that States from which few slaves escaped demanded a more stringent law than Kentucky, from which many escaped.

Whatever may have been the motives leading to the enactment, its immediate effect was the elimination of one of the great national parties, thus paving the way for the formation of parties along sectional lines. Two years after the passage of the compromise acts the Democratic national convention assembled to nominate a candidate for the

Presidency. The platform adopted by the party promised a faithful execution of the acts known as the compromise measures and added "the act for reclaiming fugitives from service or labor included; which act, being designed to carry out an express provision of the Constitution, cannot, with fidelity thereto, be repealed nor so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency." When this was read, the convention broke out in uproarious applause. Then there was a demand that it should be read again. Again there was loud applause. Why was there this demand that a law which every one knew had proved a complete failure should be made a permanent part of the Constitution? And why the ungovernable hilarity over the demand that its "efficiency" should never be impaired? Surely the motive was something other than a desire to recover lost property. Upon the Whig party had been fastened the odium for the enactment of the law, and the act unrepealed meant the death of the party. The Democrats saw good reason for laughter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

WHEREVER there are slaves there are fugitives if there is an available place of refuge. The wilds of Florida were such a refuge during the early part of last century. When the Northern States became free, fugitive slaves began to escape thither, and Canada, when it could be reached, was, of course, the goal of perfect security and liberty for all.

A professed object of the early anti-slavery societies was to prevent the enslavement of free negroes and in other ways to protect their rights. During the process of emancipation in Northern States large numbers of colored persons were spirited off to the South and sold into slavery. At various places along the border there were those who made it their duty to guard the rights of negroes and to prevent kidnapping. These guardians of the border furnished a nucleus for the

development of what was later known as the Underground Railroad.

In 1796 President Washington wrote a letter to a friend in New Hampshire with reference to obtaining the return of a negro servant. He was careful to state that the servant should remain unmolested rather than "excite a mob or riot or even uneasy sensations in the minds of well disposed citizens." The result was that the servant remained free. President Washington here assumed that "well disposed citizens" would oppose her return to slavery. Three years earlier the President had himself signed a bill to facilitate by legal process the return of fugitives escaping into other States. He was certainly aware that such an act was on the statute books when he wrote his request to his friend in New Hampshire, yet he expected that, if an attempt were made to remove the refugee by force, riot and resistance by a mob would be the result.

Not until after the foreign slave-trade had been prohibited and the domestic trade had been developed, and not until there was a pro-slavery reaction in the South which banished from the slave States all anti-slavery propaganda, did the systematic assistance rendered to fugitive slaves assume

any large proportions or arouse bitter resentment. It began in the late twenties and early thirties of the nineteenth century, extended with the spread of anti-slavery organization, and was greatly encouraged and stimulated by the enactment of the law of 1850.

The Underground Railroad was never coextensive with the abolition movement. There were always abolitionists who disapproved the practice of assisting fugitives, and others who took no part in it. Of those who were active participants, the larger proportion confined their activities to assisting those who had escaped and would take no part in seeking to induce slaves to leave their masters. Efforts of that kind were limited to a few individuals only.

Incidents drawn from the reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the reputed president of the Underground Railroad, may serve to illustrate the origin and growth of the system. He was seven years old when he first saw near his home in North Carolina a coffe of slaves being driven to the Southern market by a man on horseback with a long whip. "The driver was some distance behind with the wagon. My father addressed the slaves pleasantly and then asked, 'Well, boys, why do they chain



you?’ One of the men whose countenance betrayed unusual intelligence and whose expression denoted the deepest sadness replied: ‘They have taken us from our wives and children and they chain us lest we should make our escape and go back to them.’” When Coffin was fifteen, he rendered assistance to a man in bondage. Having an opportunity to talk with the members of a gang in the hands of a trader bound for the Southern market, he learned that one of the company, named Stephen, was a freeman who had been kidnapped and sold. Letters were written to Northern friends of Stephen who confirmed his assertion. Money was raised in the Quaker meeting and men were sent to recover the negro. Stephen was found in Georgia and after six months was liberated.

During the year 1821 other incidents occurred in the Quaker community at New Garden, near Greensboro, North Carolina, which illustrate different phases of the subject. Jack Barnes was the slave of a bachelor who became so greatly attached to his servant that he bequeathed to him not only his freedom but also a large share of his property. Relatives instituted measures to break the will, and Jack in alarm took refuge among the Quakers at New Garden. The suit went against

the negro, and the newspapers contained advertisements offering a hundred dollars for information which should result in his recovery. To prevent his return to bondage, it was decided that Jack should join a family of Coffins who were moving to Indiana.

At the same time a negro by the name of Sam had for several months been abiding in the Quaker neighborhood. He belonged to a Mr. Osborne, a prototype of Simon Legree, who was so notoriously cruel that other slave-owners assisted in protecting his victims. After the Coffins, with Jack, had been on the road for a few days, Osborne learned that a negro was with them and, feeling sure that it was his Sam, he started in hot haste after them. This becoming known to the Friends, young Levi Coffin was sent after Osborne to forestall disaster. The descriptions given of Jack and Sam were practically identical and it was surmised that when Osborne should overtake the party and discover his mistake, he would seize Jack for the sake of the offered reward. Coffin soon came up with Osborne and decided to ride with him for a time to learn his plans. In the course of their conversation, it was finally agreed that Coffin should assist in the recovery of Sam. Osborne was also generous and

insisted that if it proved to be the other "nigger" who was with the company, Coffin should have half the reward. How the young Quaker outwitted the tyrant, gained his point, sent Jack on his way to liberty, and at the same time retained the confidence of Osborne so that upon their return home he was definitely engaged to assist Osborne in finding Sam, is a fascinating story. The abolitionist won from the slaveholder the doubtful compliment that "there was not a man in that neighborhood worth a d——n to help him hunt his negro except young Levi Coffin."

Sam was perfectly safe so long as Levi Coffin was guide for the hunting-party, but matters were becoming desperate. For the fugitive something had to be done. Another family was planning to move to Indiana, and in their wagon Sam was to be concealed and thus conveyed to a free State. The business had now become serious. The laws of the State affixed the death penalty for stealing a slave. At night when young Coffin and his father, with Sam, were on their way to complete arrangements for the departure, horsemen appeared in the road near by. They had only time to throw themselves flat on the ground behind a log. From the conversation overheard, they were assured that they

had narrowly escaped the night-riders on the lookout for stray negroes. The next year, 1822, Coffin himself joined a party going to Indiana by the southern route through Tennessee and Kentucky. In the latter State they were at one time overtaken by men who professed to be looking for a pet dog, but whose real purpose was to recover runaway slaves. They insisted upon examining the contents of the wagons, for in this way only a short time previous a fugitive had been captured.

These incidents show the origin of the system. The first case of assistance rendered a negro was not in itself illegal, but was intended merely to prevent the crime of kidnapping. The second was illegal in form, but the aid was given to one who, having been set free by will, was being reënslaved, it was believed, by an unjust decision of a court. The third was a case of outrageous abuse on the part of the owner. The negro Sam had himself gone to a trader begging that he would buy him and preferring to take his chances on a Mississippi plantation rather than return to his master. The trader offered the customary price and was met with the reply that he could have the rascal if he would wait until after the enraged owner had taken his revenge, otherwise the price would be

twice the amount offered. A large proportion of the fugitives belonged to this maltreated class. Others were goaded to escape by the prospect of deportation to the Gulf States. The fugitives generally followed the beaten line of travel to the North and West.

In 1826 Levi Coffin became a merchant in Newport, Indiana, a town near the Ohio line not far from Richmond. In the town and in its neighborhood lived a large number of free negroes who were the descendants of former slaves whom North Carolina Quakers had set free and had colonized in the new country. Coffin found that these blacks were accustomed to assist fugitives on their way to Canada. When he also learnt that some had been captured and returned to bondage merely through lack of skill on the part of the negroes, he assumed active operations as a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

Coffin used the Underground Railroad as a means of making converts to the cause. One who berated him for negro-stealing was adroitly induced to meet a newly arrived passenger and listen to his pathetic story. At the psychological moment the objector was skillfully led to hand the fugitive a dollar to assist him in reaching a place of safety.

Coffin then explained to this benevolent non-abolitionist the nature of his act, assuring him that he was liable to heavy damages therefor. The reply was in this case more forcible than elegant: "Damn it! You've got me!" This conversion he publicly proclaimed for the sake of its influence upon others. Many were the instances in which those of supposed pro-slavery convictions were brought face to face with an actual case of the threatened reënslavement of a human being escaping from bondage and were, to their own surprise, overcome by the natural, humane sentiment which asserted itself. For example, a Cincinnati merchant, who at the time was supposed to be assisting one of his Southern customers to recover an escaped fugitive, was confronted at his own home by the poor half-starved victim. Yielding to the impulse of compassion, he gave the slave food and personal assistance and directed the destitute creature to a place of refuge.

The division in the Quaker meeting in Indiana with which Levi Coffin was intimately associated may serve to exemplify a corresponding attitude in other churches on the question of slavery. The Quakers availed themselves of the first great anti-slavery movement to rid themselves completely of

the burden. Their Society itself became an anti-slavery organization. Yet even so the Friends had differences of opinion as to fit methods of action. Not only did many of them disapprove of rendering aid to fugitives but they also objected to the use of the meeting-houses for anti-slavery lectures. The formation of the Liberty party served to accentuate the division. The great body of the Friends were anti-slavery Whigs.

A crisis in the affairs of the Society of Friends in the State of Indiana was reached in 1843 when the radicals seceded and organized an independent "Anti-Slavery Friends Society." Immediately there appeared in numerous localities duplicate Friends' meeting-houses. In and around one of these, distinguished as "Liberty Hall," were gathered those whose supreme religious interest was directed against the sin of slavery. Never was there a church division which involved less bad blood or sense of injury or injustice. Members of the same family attended separate churches without the least difference in their cordial relations. No important principle was involved; there were apparently good reasons for both lines of policy, and each party understood and respected the other's position. After the adoption of the

Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the passing of the Whig party, these differences disappeared, the separate organization was disbanded, and all Friends' meeting-houses became "liberty halls."

The disposition to aid the fugitive was by no means confined to the North nor to Quakers in the South. Richard Dillingham, a young Quaker who had yielded to the solicitations of escaped fugitives in Cincinnati and had undertaken a mission to Nashville, Tennessee, to rescue their relatives from a "hard master," was arrested with three stolen slaves on his hands. He made confession in open court and frankly explained his motives. The *Nashville Daily Gazette* of April 13, 1849, has words of commendation for the prisoner and his family and states that "he was not without the sympathy of those who attended the trial." Though Dillingham committed a crime to which the death penalty was attached in some of the States, the jury affixed the minimum penalty of three years' imprisonment for the offense. As Nashville was far removed from Quaker influence or any sort of anti-slavery propaganda, Dillingham was himself astonished and was profoundly grateful for the leniency shown him by Court, jury, and prosecutors. This incident occurred in the year before the adoption of the



Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. It is well known that in all times and places which were free from partizan bitterness there was a general natural sympathy for those who imperiled their life and liberty to free the slave. Throughout the South men of both races were ready to give aid to slaves seeking to escape from dangers or burdens which they regarded as intolerable. While such a man as Frederick Douglass, when still a slave, was an agent of the Underground Railroad, Southern anti-slavery people themselves were to a large extent the original projectors of the movement. Even members of the families of slaveholders have been known to assist fugitives in their escape to the North.

The fugitives traveled in various ways which were determined partly by geographical conditions and partly by the character of the inhabitants of a region. On the Atlantic coast, from Florida to Delaware, slaves were concealed in ships and were thus conveyed to free States. Thence some made their way towards Canada by steamboat or railroad, though most made the journey on foot or, less frequently, in private conveyances. Stalwart slaves sometimes walked from the Gulf States to the free States, traveling chiefly by night and

guided by the North Star. Having reached a free State, they found friends among those of their own race, or were taken in hand by officers of the Underground Railroad and were thus helped across the Canadian border.

From the seacoast the valley of the Connecticut River furnished a convenient route for completing the journey northward, though the way of the fugitives was often deflected to the Lake Champlain region. In later years, when New England became generally sympathetic, numerous lines of escape traversed that entire section. Other courses extended northward from the vicinity of Philadelphia, Delaware, and Maryland. Here, through the center of American Quakerdom, all conditions favored the escape of fugitives, for slavery and freedom were at close quarters. The activities of the Quakers, who were at first engaged merely in preventing the reënslavement of those who had a legal right to freedom, naturally expanded until aid was given without reservation to any fugitive. From Philadelphia as a distributing point the route went by way of New York and the Hudson River or up the river valleys of eastern Pennsylvania through western New York.

In addition to the routes to freedom which the

seacoast and river valleys afforded, the Appalachian chain of mountains formed an attractive highway of escape from slavery, though these mountain paths lead us to another branch of our subject not immediately connected with the Underground Railroad — the escape from bondage by the initiative of the slaves themselves or by the aid of their own people. Mountains have always been a refuge and a defense for the outlaw, and the few dwellers in this almost unknown wilderness were not infrequently either indifferent or friendly to the fugitives. The escaped slaves might, if they chose, adopt for an indefinite time the free life of the hills; but in most cases they naturally drifted northward for greater security until they found themselves in a free State. Through the mountainous regions of Virginia many thus escaped, and they were induced to remain there by the example and advice of residents of their own color. The negroes themselves excelled all others in furnishing places of refuge to fugitives from slavery and in concealing their status. For this reason John Brown and his associates were influenced to select this region for their great venture in 1859.

But there were other than geographical conditions which helped to determine the direction

of the lines of the Underground Railroad. West of the Alleghanies are the broad plains of the Mississippi Valley, and in this great region human elements rather than physical characteristics proved influential. Northern Ohio was occupied by settlers from the East, many of whom were anti-slavery. Southern Ohio was populated largely by Quakers and other people from the slave States who abhorred slavery. On the east and south the State bordered on slave territory, and every part of the region was traversed by lines of travel for the slave. In eastern and northern Indiana a favorable attitude prevailed. Southwestern Indiana, however, and southern Illinois were occupied by those less friendly to the slave, so that in these sections there is little evidence of systematic aid to fugitives. But with St. Louis, Missouri, as a starting-point, northern Illinois became honey-combed with refuges for patrons of the Underground Railroad. The negro also found friends in all the settled portions of Iowa, and at the outbreak of the Civil War a lively traffic was being developed, extending from Lawrence, Kansas, to Keokuk, Iowa.

There is respectable authority for a variety of opinions as to the requirements of the rendition

clause in the Constitution and of the Act of Congress of 1793 to facilitate the return of fugitives from service or labor; but there is no respectable authority in support of the view that neither the spirit nor the letter of the law was violated by the supporters of the Underground Railroad. This was a source of real weakness to anti-slavery leaders in politics. It was always true that only a small minority of their numbers were actual violators of the law, yet such was their relation to the organized anti-slavery movement that responsibility attached to all. The platform of the Liberty party for 1844 declared that the provisions of the Constitution for reclaiming fugitive slaves were dangerous to liberty and ought to be abrogated. It further declared that the members of the party would treat these provisions as void, because they involved an order to commit an immoral act. The platform thus explicitly committed the party to the support of the policy of rendering aid to fugitive slaves. Four years later the platform of the Free-soil party contained no reference whatever to fugitive slaves, but that of 1852 denounced the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 as repugnant to the Constitution and the spirit of Christianity and denied its binding force on the American people.

The Republican platform of 1856 made no reference to the subject.

The Underground Railroad filled an insignificant place in the general plan for emancipation, even in the minds of the directors. It was a lesser task preparatory to the great work. As to the numbers of slaves who gained their freedom by means of it, there is a wide range of opinion. Statements in Congress by Southern members that a hundred thousand had escaped must be regarded as gross exaggerations. In any event the loss was confined chiefly to the border States. Besides, it has been stated with some show of reason that the danger of servile insurrection was diminished by the escape of potential leaders.

From the standpoint of the great body of anti-slavery men who expected to settle the slavery question by peaceable means, it was a calamity of the first magnitude that, just at the time when conditions were most favorable for transferring the active crusade from the general Government to the separate States, public attention should be directed to the one point at which the conflict was most acute and irrepressible.

Previous to 1850 there had been no general acrimonious debate in Congress on the rendition of

fugitive slaves. About half of those who had previously escaped from bondage had not taken the trouble to go as far as Canada, but were living at peace in the Northern States. Few people at the North knew or cared anything about the details of a law that had been on the statute books since 1793. Members of Congress were duly warned of the dangers involved in any attempt to enforce a more stringent law than the previous act which had proved a dead letter. To those who understood the conditions, the new law also was doomed to failure. So said Senator Butler of South Carolina. An attempt to enforce it would be met by violence.

This prediction came true. The twenty thousand potential victims residing in Northern States were thrown into panic. Some rushed off to Canada; others organized means for protection. A father and son from Baltimore came to a town in Pennsylvania to recover a fugitive. An alarm was sounded; men, mostly colored, rushed to the protection of the one whose liberty was threatened. Two Quakers appeared on the scene and warned the slave-hunters to desist and upon their refusal one slave-hunter was instantly killed and the other wounded. The fugitive was conveyed to a place of safety, and to the murderers no punishment was

meted out, though the general Government made strenuous efforts to discover and punish them. In New York, though Gerrit Smith and a local clergyman with a few assistants rescued a fugitive from the officers of the law and sent him to Canada, openly proclaiming and justifying the act, no attempt was made to punish the offenders.

After a dozen years of intense and ever-increasing excitement, when other causes of friction between North and South had apparently been removed and good citizens in the two sections were rejoicing at the prospect of an era of peace and harmony, public attention was concentrated upon the one problem of conduct which would not admit of peaceable legal adjustment. Abolitionists had always been stigmatized as lawbreakers whose aim was the destruction of slavery in utter disregard of the rights of the States. This charge was absolutely false; their settled program involved full recognition of state and municipal control over slavery. Yet after public attention had become fixed upon conduct on the part of the abolitionists which was illegal, it was difficult to escape the implication that their whole course was illegal. This was the tragic significance of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.



## CHAPTER IX

### BOOKS AS ANTI-SLAVERY WEAPONS

WHITTIER offered up "thanks for the fugitive slave law; for it gave occasion for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe had been mistress of a station on the Underground Railroad at Cincinnati, the storm-center of the West, and out of her experience she has transmitted to the world a knowledge of the elemental and tragic human experiences of the slaves which would otherwise have been restricted to a select few. The mistress of a similar station in eastern Indiana, though she held novel reading a deadly sin, said: "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not a novel, it is a record of facts. I myself have listened to the same stories." The reading public in all lands soon became sympathetic participants in the labors of those who, in defiance of law, were lending a hand to the aspirants for liberty. At the time of the publication of the story in book form in March, 1852, America was being

profoundly stirred by the stories of fugitives who had escaped from European despotism. Mrs. Stowe refers to these incidents in her question: "When despairing Hungarian fugitives make their way, against all the search-warrants and authorities of their lawful governments to America, press and political cabinet ring with applause and welcome. When despairing African fugitives do the same thing — it is — what *is* it?" Little did she think that when the eloquence of the Hungarian refugee had been forgotten, the story of Eliza and Uncle Tom would ring throughout the world.

The book did far more than vindicate the conduct of those who rendered assistance to the fugitive from slavery; it let in daylight upon the essential nature of slavery. Humane and just masters are shown to be forced into participation in acts which result in intolerable cruelty. Full justice is done to the noble and admirable character of Southern slave-owners. The author had been a guest in the home of the "Shelbys," in Kentucky. She had taken great pains to understand the Southern point of view on the subject of slavery; she had entered into the real trials and difficulties involved in any plan of emancipation. St. Clair, speaking to Miss Ophelia, his New England cousin, says:

If we emancipate, are you willing to educate? How many families of your town would take in a negro man or woman, teach them, bear with them, and seek to make them Christians? How many merchants would take Adolph, if I wanted to make him a clerk; or mechanics, if I wanted to teach him a trade? If I wanted to put Jane and Rosa to a school, how many schools are there in the Northern States that would take them in? How many families that would board them? and yet they are as white as many a woman north or south. You see, cousin, I want justice done us. We are in a bad position. We are the more *obvious* oppressors of the negro; but the unchristian prejudice of the north is an oppressor almost equally severe.

Throughout the book the idea is elaborated in many ways. Miss Ophelia is introduced for the purpose of contrasting Northern ignorance and New England prejudice with the patience and forbearance of the better class of slave-owners of the South. The genuine affection of an unspoiled child for negro friends is made especially emphatic. Miss Ophelia objected to Eva's expressions of devotion to Uncle Tom. Her father insists that his daughter shall not be robbed of the free utterance of her high regard, observing that "the child is the only true democrat." There is only one Simon Legree in the book, and he is of New England extraction. The story is as distinctly intended to

inform Northern ignorance and to remove Northern prejudice as it is to justify the conduct of abolitionists.

What was the effect of the publication? In European countries far removed from local, partizan prejudice, it was immediately received as a great revelation of the spirit of liberty. It was translated into twenty-three different languages. So devoted were the Italians to the reading of the story that there was earnest effort to suppress its circulation. As a drama it proved a great success, not only in America and England but in France and other countries as well. More than a million copies of the story were sold in the British Empire. Lord Palmerston avers that he had not read a novel for thirty years, yet he read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* three times and commended the book for the statesmanship displayed in it.

What is in the story to call forth such commendation from the cold-blooded English statesman? The book revealed, in a way fitted to carry conviction to every unprejudiced reader, the impossibility of uniting slavery with freedom under the same Government. Either all must be free or the mass subject to the few — or there is actual war. This principle is finely brought out in the predica-

ment of the Quaker confronted by a fugitive with wife and child who had seen a sister sold and conveyed to a life of shame on a Southern plantation. "Am I going to stand by and see them take my wife and sell her?" exclaimed the negro. "No, God help me! I'll fight to the last breath before they shall take my wife and son. Can you blame me?" To which the Quaker replied: "Mortal man cannot blame thee, George. Flesh and blood could not do otherwise. 'Woe unto the world because of offences but woe unto them through whom the offence cometh.'" "Would not even you, sir, do the same, in my place?" "I pray that I be not tried." And in the ensuing events the Quaker played an important part.

Laws enacted for the protection of slave property are shown to be destructive of the fundamental rights of freemen; they are inhuman. The Ohio Senator, who in his lofty preserve at the capital of his country could discourse eloquently of his readiness to keep faith with the South in the matter of the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law, becomes, when at home with his family, a flagrant violator of the law. Elemental human nature is pitted against the apparent interests of a few individual slave-owners.

The story of Uncle Tom placed all supporters of the new law on the defensive. It was read by all classes North and South. *Uncle Tom's Cabin as it is* was called forth from the South as a reply to Mrs. Stowe's book, and there ensued a general discussion of the subject which was on the whole enlightening. Yet the immediate political effect of the publication was less than might have been expected from a book so widely read and discussed. Its appearance early in the decade did not prevent the apparent pro-slavery reaction already described. But Mr. Rhodes calls attention to the different impression which the book made upon adults and boys. Hardened sinners in partizan politics could read the book, laugh and weep over the passing incidents, and then go on as if nothing had happened. Not so with the thirteen-year-old boy. He never could be the same again. The Republican party of 1860 was especially successful in gaining the first vote of the youthful citizen and undoubtedly owed much of its influence to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Two lines of attack were rapidly rendering impossible the continuance of slavery in the United States. Mrs. Stowe gave effective expression to the moral, religious, and humanitarian sentiment

against slavery. In the year in which her work was published, Frederick Law Olmsted began his extended journeys throughout the South. He represents the impartial scientific observer. His books were published during the years 1856, 1857, and 1861. They constitute in their own way an indictment against slavery quite as forcible as that of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but an indictment that rests chiefly upon the blighting influence of the institution of slavery upon agriculture, manufactures, and the general industrial and social order. The crisis came too soon for these publications to have any marked effect upon the issue. Their appeal was to the deliberate and thoughtful reader, and political control had already drifted into the hands of those who were not deliberate and composed.

In 1857, however, there appeared a book which did exert a marked influence upon immediate political issues. There is no evidence that Hinton Rowan Helper, the author of *The Impending Crisis*, had any knowledge of the writings of Olmsted; but he was familiar with Northern anti-slavery literature. "I have considered my subject more particularly," he states in his preface, "with reference to its economic aspects as regards the whites — not with

reference, except in a very slight degree, to its humanitarian or religious aspects. To the latter side of the question, Northern writers have already done full and timely justice. . . . Yankee wives have written the most popular anti-slavery literature of the day. Against this I have nothing to say; it is all well enough for women to give the fictions of slavery; men should give the facts." He denies that it had been his purpose to cast unmerited opprobrium upon slaveholders; yet a sense of personal injury breathes throughout the pages. If he had no intention of casting unmerited opprobrium upon slaveholders, it is difficult to imagine what language he could have used if he had undertaken to pass the limit of deserved reprobation. In this regard the book is quite in line with the style of Southern utterance against abolitionists.

Helper belonged to a slaveholding family, for a hundred years resident in the Carolinas. The dedication is significant. It is to three personal friends from three slave States who at the time were residing in California, in Oregon, and in Washington Territory, "and to the non-slaveholding whites of the South generally, whether at home or abroad." Out of the South had come the inspiration for the religious and humanitarian attack



upon slavery. From the same source came the call for relief of the poverty-stricken white victims of the institution.

Helper's book revived the controversy which had been forcibly terminated a quarter of a century before. He resumes the argument of the members of the Virginia legislature of 1832. He reprints extended selections from that memorable debate and then, by extended references to later official reports, points out how slavery is impoverishing the South. The South is shown to have continuously declined, while the North has made immense gains. In a few years the relation of the South to the North would resemble that of Poland to Russia or of Ireland to England. The author sees no call for any arguments against slavery as an economic system; he would simply bring the earlier characterization of the situation down to date.

Helper differs radically from all earlier speakers and writers in that he outlines a program for definite action. He estimates that for the entire South there are seven white non-slaveholders for every three slaveholders. He would organize these non-slaveholding whites into an independent political party and would hold a general convention of

non-slaveholders from every slave State to adopt measures to restrain "the diabolical excesses of the oligarchy" and to annihilate slavery. Slaveholders should be entirely excluded from any share in government. They should be treated as criminals ostracized from respectable society. He is careful to state, however, that by slaveholder he does not mean such men as Benton of Missouri and many others throughout the slave States who retain the sentiments on the slavery question of the "immortal Fathers of the Republic." He has in mind only the new order of owners, who have determined by criminal methods to inflict the crime of slavery upon an overwhelming majority of their white fellow-citizens.

The publication of *The Impending Crisis* created a profound sensation among Southern leaders. So long as the attack upon the peculiar institution emanated from the North, the defenders had the full benefit of local prejudice and resentment against outside intrusion. Helper was himself a thorough-going believer in state rights. Slavery was to be abolished, as he thought, by the action of the separate States. Here he was in accord with Northern abolitionists. If such literature as Helper's volume should find its way into the South, it

would be no longer possible to palm off upon the unthinking public the patent falsehood that abolitionists of the North were attempting to impose by force a change in Southern institutions. All that Southern abolitionists ever asked was the privilege of remaining at home in their own South in the full exercise of their constitutional rights.

Southern leaders were undoubtedly aware of the concurrent publications of travelers and newspaper reporters, of which Olmsted's books were conspicuous examples. Olmsted and Helper were both sources of proof that slavery was bringing the South to financial ruin. The facts were getting hold of the minds of the Southern people. The debate which had been adjourned was on the eve of being resumed. Complete suppression of the new scientific industrial argument against slavery seemed to slave-owners to furnish their only defense.

The Appalachian ranges of mountains drove a wedge of liberty and freedom from Pennsylvania almost to the Gulf. In the upland regions slavery could not flourish. There was always enmity between the planters of the coast and the dwellers on the upland. The slaveholding oligarchy had

always ruled, but the day of the uplanders was at hand. This is the explanation of the veritable panic which Helper's publication created. A debate which should follow the line of this old division between the peoples of the Atlantic slave States would, under existing conditions, be fatal to the institution of slavery. West Virginia did become a free State at the first opportunity. Counties in western North Carolina claim to have furnished a larger proportion of their men to the Union army than any other counties in the country. Had the plan for peaceable emancipation projected by abolitionists been permitted to take its course, the uplands of South Carolina would have been pitted against the lowlands, and Senator Tillman would have appeared as a rampant abolitionist. There might have been violence, but it would have been confined to limited areas in the separate States. Had the crisis been postponed, there surely would have been a revival of abolitionism within the Southern States. Slavery in Missouri was already approaching a crisis. Southern leaders had long foreseen that the State would abolish slavery if a free State should be established on the western boundary. This was actually taking place. Kansas was filling up with free-state

settlers and, by the act of its own citizens, a few years later did abolish slavery.

Republicans naturally made use of Helper's book for party purposes. A cheap abridged edition was brought out. Several Republican leaders were induced to sign their names to a paper commending the publication. Among these was John Sherman of Ohio, who in the organization of the newly elected House of Representatives in 1859 was the leading candidate of the Republicans for the speakership. During the contest the fact that his name was on this paper was made public, and Southern leaders were furious. Extracts were read to prove that the book was incendiary. Millson of Virginia said that "one who consciously, deliberately, and of purpose lends his name and influence to the propagation of such writings is not only not fit to be speaker, but he is not fit to live." It is one of the ironies of the situation that the passage selected to prove the incendiary character of the book is almost a literal quotation from the debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1832.

## CHAPTER X

### “BLEEDING KANSAS”

BOTH the leading political parties were, in the campaign of 1852, fully committed to the acceptance of the so-called Compromise of 1850 as a final settlement of the slavery question; both were committed to the support of the Fugitive Slave Act. The Free-soil party, with John P. Hale as its candidate, did make a vigorous attack upon the Fugitive Slave Act, and opposed all compromises respecting slavery, but Free-soilers had been to a large extent reabsorbed into the Democratic party, their vote of 1852 being only about half that of 1848. Though the Whig vote was large and only about two hundred thousand less than that of the Democrats, yet it was so distributed that the Whigs carried only four States, Massachusetts, Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The other States gave a Democratic plurality.

Had there been time for readjustment, the Whig

party might have recovered lost ground, but no time was permitted. There was in progress in Missouri a political conflict which was already commanding national attention. Thomas H. Benton, for thirty years a Senator from Missouri, and a national figure, was the storm-center. His enemies accused him of being a Free-soiler, an abolitionist in disguise. He was professedly a stanch and uncompromising unionist, a personal and political opponent of John C. Calhoun. According to his own statement he had been opposed to the extension of slavery since 1804, although he had advocated the admission of Missouri with a pro-slavery constitution in 1820. He was, from the first, senior Senator from the State, and by a peculiar combination of influences incurred his first defeat for reëlection in 1851.

Benton's defeat in the Missouri Legislature was largely the result of national pro-slavery influences. In a former chapter, reference was made to the Ohio River as furnishing a "providential argument against slavery." The Mississippi River as the eastern boundary of Missouri furnished a like argument, but on the north not even a prairie brook separated free labor in Iowa from slave labor in Missouri. The inhabitants of western Missouri,

realizing that the tenure of their peculiar institution was becoming weaker in the east and north, early became convinced that the organization of a free State along their western boundary would be followed by the abolition of slavery in their own State. This condition attracted the attention of the national guardians of pro-slavery interests. Calhoun, Davis, Breckinridge, Toombs, and others were in constant communication with local leaders. A certain Judge W. C. Price, a religious fanatic, and a pro-slavery devotee, was induced to visit every part of the State in 1844, calling the attention of all slaveholders to the perils of the situation and preparing the way for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Senator Benton, who was approached on the subject, replied in such a way that all radical defenders of slavery, both national leaders and local politicians, were moved to unite for his political defeat.

David R. Atchison, junior Senator from Missouri, had been made the leader of the pro-slavery forces. The defeat of Benton in the Missouri Legislature did not end the strife. He at once became a candidate for Atchison's place in the election which was to occur in 1855, and he was in the meantime elected to the House of Representatives in



1852. The most telling consideration in Benton's favor was the general demand, in which he himself joined, for the immediate organization of the western territory in order to facilitate the building of a system of railways reaching the Pacific, with St. Louis as the point of departure. For a time, in 1852 and 1853, Benton was apparently triumphant, and Atchison was himself willing to consent to the organization of the new territory with slavery excluded. The national leaders, however, were not of the same mind. The real issue was the continuance of slavery in the State; the one thing which must not be permitted was the transfer of anti-slavery agitation to the separate States. Henry Clay's proposal of 1849 to provide for gradual emancipation in Kentucky was bitterly resented. It had long been an axiom with the slaveryocracy that the institution would perish unless it had the opportunity to expand. Out of this conviction arose Calhoun's famous theory that slave-owners had under the Constitution an equal right with the owners of all other forms of property in all the Territories. The theory itself assumed that the act prohibiting slavery in the territory north of the southern boundary of Missouri was unconstitutional and void.

But this theory had not yet received judicial sanction, and the time was at hand when the question of freedom or slavery in the western territory was to be determined. Between March and December, 1853, the discovery was made that the Act of 1850 organizing the Territories of New Mexico and Utah had superseded the Compromise of 1820; that a principle had been recognized applicable to all the Territories; that all were open to settlement on equal terms to slaveholders and non-slaveholders; that the subject of slavery should be removed from Congress to the people of the Territories; and that they should decide, either when a territorial legislature was organized or at the time of the adoption of a constitution preparatory to statehood, whether or not slavery should be authorized. These ideas found expression in various newspapers during the month of December, 1853. Though the authorship of the new theory is still a matter of dispute, it is well known that Stephen A. Douglas became its chief sponsor and champion. The real motives and intentions of Douglas himself and of many of his supporters will always remain obscure and uncertain. But no uncertainty attaches to the motives of Senator Atchison and the leaders of the Calhoun section of the

Democratic party. For ten years at least they had been laboring to get rid of the Missouri Compromise. Their motive was to defend slavery and especially to forestall a successful movement for emancipation in the State of Missouri.

From early in January, 1854, until late in May, Douglas's Nebraska bill held the attention of Congress and of the entire country. At first the measure simply assumed that the Missouri Compromise had been superseded by the Act of 1850. Later the bill was amended in such a way as to repeal distinctly that time-honored act. At first the plan was to organize Nebraska as a single Territory extending from Texas to Canada. Later it was proposed to organize separate Territories, one west of Missouri under the name of Kansas, the other west of Iowa under the name of Nebraska. Opposition came from Free-soilers, from Northern Whigs and a few Whigs from the South, and from a large proportion of Northern Democrats. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise came like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky to the people of the North. For a time Douglas was the most unpopular of political leaders and was apparently repudiated by his party. The first name designating the opponents of the Douglas bill was “Anti-

Nebraska men," for which the name Republican was gradually substituted and in 1856 became the accepted title of the party.

The provision for two territorial governments instead of one carried with it the idea of a continued balance between slave and free States; Kansas, being on a geographical parallel with the slave States, would probably permit slavery, while Nebraska would be occupied by free-state immigrants. Though this was a commonly accepted view, Eli Thayer of Worcester, Massachusetts, and a few others took a different view. They proposed to make an end of the discussion of the extension of slavery by sending free men who were opposed to slavery to occupy the territory open for settlement. To attain this object they organized an Emigrant Aid Company incorporated under the laws of the State. Even before the bill was passed, the corporation was in full working order. Thayer himself traveled extensively throughout the Northern States stimulating interest in western emigration, with the conviction that the disturbing question could be peacefully settled in this way. California had thus been saved to freedom; why not all other Territories? The new company had as adviser and colaborer

Dr. Charles Robinson, who had crossed the Kansas Territory on his way to California and had acquired valuable experience in the art of state-building under peculiar conditions.

The first party sent out by the Emigrant Aid Company arrived in Kansas early in August, 1854, and selected the site for the town of Lawrence. During the later months of the year, four other parties were sent out, in all numbering nearly seven hundred. Through extensive advertisement by the company, through the general interest in the subject and the natural flow of emigration to the West, Kansas was receiving large accessions of free-state settlers.

Meanwhile the men of Missouri, some of whom had striven for a decade to secure the privilege of extending slavery into the new Territory, were not idle. Instantly upon the removal of legal barriers, they occupied adjacent lands, founded towns, staked out claims, formed plans for preëmpting the entire region and for forestalling or driving out all intruders. They had at first the advantage of position, for they did not find it difficult to maintain two homes, one in Kansas for purposes of voting and fighting and another in Missouri for actual residence.

Andrew H. Reeder, a Pennsylvania Democrat of strong pro-slavery prejudices, was appointed first Governor of the Territory. When he arrived in Kansas in October, 1854, there were already several thousand settlers on the ground and others were continually arriving. He appointed the 29th of November for the election of a delegate to Congress. On that day several hundred Missourians came into the Territory and voted. There was no violence and no contest; the free-state men had no separate candidate. Notwithstanding the violence of language used by opposing factions, notwithstanding the organization of secret societies pledged to drive out all Northern intruders, there was no serious disturbance until March 30, 1855, the day appointed for the election of members of the territorial Legislature. On that day the Missourians came full five thousand strong, armed with guns, bowie-knives, and revolvers. They met with no resistance from the residents, who were unarmed. They took charge of the precincts and chose pro-slavery delegates with one exception. Governor Reeder protested and recommended to the precincts the filing of protests. Only seven responded, however, and in these cases new elections were held and contesting delegates elected.

The Governor issued certificates to these and to all those who in other precincts had been chosen by the horde from Missouri. When the Legislature met in July, the seven contests were decided in favor of the pro-slavery party, the single free-state member resigned, and the assembly was unanimous.

Governor Reeder fully expected that President Pierce would nullify the election, and to this end he made a journey to Washington in April. On the way he delivered a public address at Easton, Pennsylvania, describing in lurid colors the outrage which had been perpetrated upon the people of Kansas by the “border ruffians” from Missouri, and asserting that the accounts in the Northern press had not been exaggerated.

While Governor Reeder in contact with the actual events in Kansas was becoming an active Free-soiler, President Pierce in association with Jefferson Davis and others of his party was developing active sympathies with the people of western Missouri. To the President this invasion of territory west of the slave State by Northern men aided by Northern corporations seemed a violation of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and he sought to induce Reeder to resign. This, however,

the Governor positively refused to do unless the President would formally approve his conduct in Kansas — an endorsement which required more fortitude than President Pierce possessed. On his return to Kansas, determined to do what he could to protect the Kansas people from injustice, he called the Legislature to meet at Pawnee, a point far removed from the Missouri border. Immediately upon their organization at that place the members of the Legislature adjourned to meet at Shawnee, near the border of Missouri. The Governor, who decided that this action was illegal, then refused to recognize the Assembly at the new place. A deadlock thus ensued which was broken on the 15th of August by the removal of Governor Reeder and the appointment of Wilson Shannon of Ohio in his place.

In the meantime the territorial Legislature had adjourned, having “enacted” an elaborate proslavery code made up from the slave code of Missouri with a number of special adaptations. For example, it was made a penitentiary offense to deny by speaking or writing, or by printing, or by introducing any printed matter, the right of persons to hold slaves in the Territory; no man was eligible to jury service who was conscientiously



opposed to holding slaves; and lawyers were bound by oath to support the territorial statutes.

The free-state men, with the approval of Reeder, refused to recognize the Legislature and inaugurated a movement in the fall of 1855 to adopt a constitution and to organize a provisional territorial Government preparatory to admission as a State, following in this respect the procedure in California and Michigan. A convention met in Topeka in October, 1855, and completed on the 11th of November the draft of a constitution which prohibited slavery. On the 15th of December the constitution was approved by a practically unanimous vote, only free-state men taking part in the election. A month later a Legislature was elected and at the same time Charles Robinson was elected Governor of the new commonwealth. In the previous October, Reeder had been chosen Free-soil delegate to Congress. The Topeka free-state Legislature met on the 4th of March, 1856, and after petitioning Congress to admit Kansas under the Topeka constitution, adjourned until the 4th of July pending the action of Congress. Thus at the end of two years two distinct Governments had come into existence within the Territory of Kansas.

It speaks volumes for the self-control and moderation of the two parties that no hostile encounter had occurred between the contestants. When the armed Missourians came in March, 1855, the unarmed settlers offered no resistance. Afterward, however, they supplied themselves with Sharp's rifles and organized a militia. With the advent of Governor Shannon in September, 1855, the pro-slavery position was much strengthened. In November, in a quarrel over a land claim, a free-state settler by the name of Dow was killed. The murderer escaped, but a friend of the victim was accused of uttering threats against a friend of the murderer. For this offense a posse led by Sheriff Jones, a Missourian, seized him, and would have carried him away if fourteen free-state men had not "persuaded" the Sheriff to surrender his prisoner. This interference was accepted by the Missourians as a signal for battle. The rescuers must be arrested and punished. A large force of infuriated Missourians and pro-slavery settlers assembled for a raid upon the town of Lawrence. In the meantime the Lawrence militia planned and executed a systematic defense of the town. When the two armies came within speaking distance, a parley ensued in which the Governor took a leading part

in settling the affair without a hostile shot. This is known in Kansas history as the “Wakarusa War.”

The progress of affairs in Kansas was followed with intense interest in all parts of the country. North and South vied with each other in the encouragement of emigration to Kansas. Colonel Buford of Alabama sold a large number of slaves and devoted the proceeds to meeting the expense of conducting a troop of three hundred men to Kansas in the winter of 1856. They went armed with “the sword of the spirit,” and all provided with Bibles supplied by the leading churches. Arrived in the territory, they were duly furnished with more worldly weapons and were drilled for action. About the same time a parallel incident is said to have occurred in New Haven, Connecticut. A deacon in one of the churches had enlisted a company of seventy bound for Kansas. A meeting was held in the church to raise money to defray expenses. The leader of the company declared that they also needed rifles for self-defense. Forthwith Professor Silliman, of the University, subscribed one Sharp’s rifle, and others followed with like pledges. Finally Henry Ward Beecher, who was the speaker of the occasion, rose and promised that, if twenty-five rifles were pledged

on the spot, Plymouth Church in Brooklyn would be responsible for the remaining twenty-five that were needed. He had already said in a previous address that for the slaveholders of Kansas, Sharp's rifles were a greater moral agency than the Bible. This led to the designation of the weapons as "Beecher's Bibles." Such was the spirit which prevailed in the two sections of the country.

President Pierce had now become intensely hostile towards the free-state inhabitants of Kansas. Having recognized the Legislature elected on March 30, 1855, as the legitimate Government, he sent a special message to Congress on January 24, 1856, in which he characterized as revolutionary the movement of the free-state men to organize a separate Government in Kansas. From the President's point of view, the emissaries of the New England Emigrant Aid Association were unlawful invaders. In this position he not only had the support of the South, but was powerfully seconded by Stephen A. Douglas and other Northern Democrats.

The attitude of the Administration at Washington was a source of great encouragement to Sheriff Jones and his associates, who were anxious to wreak their vengeance on the city of Lawrence for

the outcome of the Wakarusa War. Jones came to Lawrence apparently for the express purpose of picking a quarrel, for he revived the old dispute about the rescuing party of the previous fall. As a consequence one enraged opponent slapped him in the face, and at last an unknown assassin entered the sheriff's tent by night and inflicted a revolver wound in his back. Though the citizens of Lawrence were greatly chagrined at this event and offered a reward for the discovery of the assailant, the attack upon the sheriff was made the signal for drastic procedure against the town of Lawrence. A grand jury found indictments for treason against Reeder, Robinson, and other leading citizens of the town. The United States marshal gave notice that he expected resistance in making arrests and called upon all law-abiding citizens of the Territory to aid in executing the law. It was a welcome summons to the pro-slavery forces. Not only local militia companies responded but also Buford's company and various companies from Missouri, in all more than seven hundred men, with two cannon. It had always been the set purpose of the free-state men not to resist federal authority by force, unless as a last resort, and they had no intention of opposing the marshal in making arrests.

He performed his duty without hindrance and then placed the armed troops under the command of Sheriff Jones, who proceeded first to destroy the printing-press of the town of Lawrence. Then, against the protest of the marshal and Colonel Buford, the vindictive sheriff trained his guns upon the new hotel which was the pride of the city; the ruin of the building was made complete by fire, while a drunken mob pillaged the town.

On May 22, 1856, the day following the attack upon Lawrence, Charles Sumner was struck down in the United States Senate on account of a speech made in defense of the rights of Kansas settlers. The two events, which were reported at the same time in the daily press, furnished the key-note to the presidential campaign of that year, for nominating conventions followed in a few days and "bleeding Kansas" was the all-absorbing issue. In spite of the destruction of property in Lawrence and the arrest of the leaders of the free-state party, Kansas had not been plunged into a state of civil war. The free-state party had fired no hostile shot. Governor Robinson and his associates still relied upon public opinion and they accepted the wanton attack upon Lawrence as the best assurance that they would yet win their cause by legal means.

A change, however, soon took place which is associated with the entrance of John Brown into the history of Kansas. Brown and his sons were living at Osawatomie, some thirty miles south of Lawrence. They were present at the Wakarusa War in December, 1855, and were on their way to the defense of Lawrence on May 21, 1856, when they were informed that the town had been destroyed. Three days after this event Brown and his sons with two or three others made a midnight raid upon their pro-slavery neighbors living in the Pottawatomie valley and slew five men. The authors of this deed were not certainly known until the publication of a confession of one of the party in 1879, twenty years after the chief actor had won the reputation of a martyr to the cause of liberty. The Browns, however, were suspected at the time; warrants were out for their arrest; and their homes were destroyed.

For more than three months after this incident, Kansas was in a state of war; in fact, two distinct varieties of warfare were carried on. Publicly organized companies on both sides engaged in acts of attack and defense, while at the same time irresponsible secret bands were busy in violent reprisals, in plunder and assassination. In both of

these forms of warfare, the free-state men proved themselves fully equal to their opponents, and Governor Shannon was entirely unable to cope with the situation. It is estimated that two hundred men were slain and two million dollars' worth of property was destroyed.

The state of affairs in Kansas served to win many Northern Democrats to the support of the Republicans. The Administration at Washington was held responsible for the violence and bloodshed. The Democratic leaders in the political campaign, determined now upon a complete change in the Government of the Territory, appointed J. W. Geary as Governor and placed General Smith in charge of the troops. The new incumbents, both from Pennsylvania, entered upon their labors early in September, and before the October state elections Geary was able to report that peace reigned throughout the Territory. A prompt reaction in favor of the Democrats followed. Buchanan, their presidential candidate, rejoiced in the fact that order had been restored by two citizens of his own State. It was now very generally conceded that Kansas would become a free State, and intimate associates of Buchanan assured the public that he was himself of that opinion and that if



elected he would insure to the free-state party even-handed justice. Thousands of voters were thus won to Buchanan's support. There was a general distrust of the Republican candidate as a man lacking political experience, and a strong conservative reaction against the idea of electing a President by the votes of only one section of the country. At the election in November, Buchanan received a majority of sixty of the electoral votes over Frémont, but in the popular vote he fell short of a majority by nearly 400,000. Fillmore, candidate of the Whig and the American parties, received 874,000 votes.

There was still profound distrust of the administration of the Territory of Kansas, and the free-state settlers refused to vote at the election set for the choosing of a new territorial Legislature in October. The result was another pro-slavery assembly. Governor Geary, however, determined to secure and enforce just treatment of both parties. He was at once brought into violent conflict with the Legislature in an experience which was almost an exact counterpart of that of Governor Reeder; and Washington did not support his efforts to secure fair dealings. A pro-slavery deputation visited President Pierce in February, 1857, and returned

with the assurance that Governor Geary would be removed. Without waiting for the President to act, Geary resigned in disgust on the 4th of March. Of the three Governors whom President Pierce appointed, two became active supporters of the free-state party and a third, Governor Shannon, fled from the territory in mortal terror lest he should be slain by members of the party which he had tried to serve.

## CHAPTER XI

CHARLES SUMNER

THE real successor to John Quincy Adams as the protagonist of the anti-slavery cause in Congress proved to be not Seward but Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. This newcomer entered the Senate without previous legislative experience but with an unusual equipment for the rôle he was to play. A graduate of Harvard College at the age of nineteen, he had entered upon the study of law in the newly organized law school in which Joseph Story held one of the two professorships. He was admitted to the bar in 1834, but three years later he left his slender law practice for a long period of European travel. This three years' sojourn brought him into intimate touch with the leading spirits in arts, letters, and public life in England and on the Continent, and thus ripened his talents to their full maturity. He returned to his law practice poor in pocket but rich in

the possession of lifelong friendships and happy memories.

Sumner's political career did not begin until 1847, when as a Whig he not only opposed any further extension of slavery but strove to commit his party to the policy of emancipation in all the States. Failing in this attempt, Sumner became an active Free-soiler in 1848. He was twice a candidate for Congress on the Free-soil ticket but failed of election. In 1851 he was elected to the United States Senate by a coalition between his party and the Democrats. This is the only public office he ever held, but he was continuously re-elected until his death in 1874.

John Quincy Adams had addressed audiences trained in the old school, which did not defend slavery on moral grounds. Charles Sumner faced audiences of the new school, which upheld the institution as a righteous moral order. This explains the chief difference in the attitude of the two leaders. Sumner, like Adams, began as an opponent of pro-slavery aggression, but he went farther: he attacked the institution itself as a great moral evil.

As a constitutional lawyer Sumner is not the equal of his predecessor, Daniel Webster. He is

less original, less convincing in the enunciation of broad general principles. He appears rather as a special pleader marshaling all available forces against the one institution which assailed the Union. In this particular work, he surpassed all others, for, with his unbounded industry, he permitted no precedent, no legal advantage, no incident of history, no fact in current politics fitted to strengthen his cause, to escape his untiring search. He showed a marvelous skill in the selection, arrangement, and presentation of his materials, and for his models he took the highest forms of classic forensic utterance.

Sumner exhibited the ordinary aloofness and lack of familiarity with actual conditions in the South which was characteristic of the New England abolitionist. He perceived no race problem, no peculiar difficulty in the readjustments of master and slave which were involved in emancipation, and he ignored all obstacles to the accomplishment of his ends. Webster's arraignment of South Carolina was directed against an alleged erroneous dogma and only incidentally affected personal morality. The reaction, therefore, was void of bitter resentment. Sumner's charges were directed against alleged moral turpitude, and the classic

form and scrupulous regard for parliamentary rules which he observed only added to the feeling of personal resentment on the part of his opponents. Some of the defenders of slavery were themselves devoted students of the classics, but they found that the orations of Demosthenes furnished nothing suited to their purpose. The result was a humiliating exhibition of weakness, personal abuse, and vindictiveness on their part.

There was a conspiracy of silence on the slavery question in 1852. Each of the national parties was definitely committed to the support of the compromise and especially to the faithful observance of the Fugitive Slave Law. Free-soilers had distinctly declined in numbers and influence during the four preceding years. Only a handful of members in each House of Congress remained unaffiliated with the parties whose platforms had ordained silence on the one issue of chief public concern. It was by a mere accident in Massachusetts politics that Charles Sumner was sent to the Senate as a man free on all public questions.

While the parties were making their nominations for the Presidency, Sumner sought diligently for an opportunity in the Senate to give utterance to the sentiments of his party on the repeal of the

Fugitive Slave Act. But not until late in August did he overcome the resistance of the combined opposition and gain the floor. The watchmen were caught off guard when Sumner introduced an amendment to an appropriation bill which enabled him to deliver a carefully prepared address, several hours in length, calling for the repeal of the law.

The first part of this speech is devoted to the general topic of the relation of the national Government to slavery and was made in answer to the demand of Calhoun and his followers for the direct national recognition of slavery. For such a demand Sumner found no warrant. By the decision of Lord Mansfield, said he, "the state of slavery" was declared to be "of such a nature, that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political, but *only by positive law*. . . . it is so odious, that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive law." Adopting the same principle, the Supreme Court of the State of Mississippi, a tribunal of slaveholders, asserted that "slavery is condemned by reason and the Laws of Nature. It exists, and can *only* exist, through municipal regulations." So also declared the Supreme Court of Kentucky and numerous other tribunals. This aspect of the subject furnished Sumner occasion

for a masterly array of all the utterances in favor of liberty to be found in the Constitution, in the Declaration of Independence, in the constitutional conventions, in the principles of common law. All these led up to and supported the one grand conclusion that, when Washington took the oath as President of the United States, "slavery existed nowhere on the national territory" and therefore "is in no respect a national institution." Apply the principles of the Constitution in their purity, then, and "in all national territories slavery will be impossible. On the high seas, under the national flag, slavery will be impossible. In the District of Columbia, slavery will instantly cease. Inspired by these principles, Congress can give no sanction to slavery by the admission of new slave States. Nowhere under the Constitution can the Nation by legislation or otherwise, support slavery, hunt slaves, or hold property in man. . . . As slavery is banished from the national jurisdiction, it will cease to vex our national politics. It may linger in the States as a local institution; but it will no longer engender national animosities when it no longer demands national support."

The second part of Sumner's address dealt



directly with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. It is much less convincing and suggests more of the characteristics of the special pleader with a difficult case. Sumner here undertook to prove that Congress exceeded its powers when it presumed to lay down rules for the rendition of fugitive slaves, and this task exceeded even his power as a constitutional lawyer.

The circumstances under which Sumner attacked slavery were such as to have alarmed a less self-centered man, for the two years following the introduction of the Nebraska bill were marked by the most acrimonious debate in the history of Congress, and by physical encounters, challenges, and threats of violence. But though Congressmen carried concealed weapons, Sumner went his way unarmed and apparently in complete unconcern as to any personal danger, though it is known that he was fully aware that in the faithful performance of what he deemed to be his duty he was incurring the risk of assassination.

The pro-slavery party manifested on all occasions a disposition to make the most of the weak point in Sumner's constitutional argument against the Fugitive Slave Law. He was accused of taking an oath to support the Constitution though at the

same time intending to violate one of its provisions. In a discussion, in June, 1854, over a petition praying for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act, Senator Butler of South Carolina put the question directly to Senator Sumner whether he would himself unite with others in returning a fugitive to his master. Sumner's quick reply was, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Enraged Southerners followed this remark with a most bitter onslaught upon Sumner which lasted for two days. When Sumner again got the floor, he said in reference to Senator Butler's remark: "In fitful phrase, which seemed to come from unconscious excitement, so common with the Senator, he shot forth various cries about 'dogs,' and, among other things, asked if there was any 'dog' in the Constitution? The Senator did not seem to bear in mind, through the heady currents of that moment that, by the false interpretation he fastens upon the Constitution, he has helped to nurture there a whole kennel of Carolina bloodhounds, trained, with savage jaw and insatiable in scent, for the hunt of flying bondmen. No, sir, I do not believe that there is any 'kennel of bloodhounds,' or even any 'dog' in the Constitution." Thereafter offensive personal references between the Senators

from Massachusetts and South Carolina became habitual. These personalities were a source of regret to many of Sumner's best friends, but they fill a small place, after all, in his great work. Nor were they the chief source of rancor on the part of his enemies, for Southern orators were accustomed to personalities in debate. Sumner was feared and hated principally because his presence in Congress endangered the institution of slavery.

Sumner's speech on the crime against Kansas was perhaps the most remarkable effort of his career. It had been known for many weeks that Sumner was preparing to speak upon the burning question, and his friends had already expressed anxiety for his personal safety. For the larger part of two days, May 19 and 20, 1856, he held the reluctant attention of the Senate. For the delivery of this speech he chose a time which was most opportune. The crime against Kansas had, in a sense, culminated in March of the previous year, but the settlers had refused to submit to the Government set up by hostile invaders. They had armed themselves for the defense of their rights, had elected a Governor and a Legislature by voluntary association, had called a convention, and had adopted a constitution preparatory to admission

to the Union. That constitution was now before the Senate for approval. President Pierce, Stephen A. Douglas, and all the Southern leaders had decided to treat as treasonable acts the efforts of Kansas settlers to secure an orderly government. Their plans for the arrest of the leaders were well advanced and the arrests were actually made on the day after Sumner had concluded his speech.

A paragraph in the address is prophetic of what occurred within a week. Douglas had introduced a bill recognizing the Legislature chosen by the Missourians as the legal Government and providing for the formation of a constitution under its initiative at some future date. After describing this proposed action as a continuation of the crime against Kansas, Sumner declared: "Sir, you cannot expect that the people of Kansas will submit to the usurpation which this bill sets up and bids them bow before, as the Austrian tyrant set up the ducal hat in the Swiss market-place. If you madly persevere, Kansas will not be without her William Tell, who will refuse at all hazards to recognize the tyrannical edict; and this will be the beginning of civil war."

To keep historical sequence clear at this point, all thought of John Brown should be eliminated,

for he was then unknown to the public. It must be remembered that Governor Robinson and the free-state settlers were, as Sumner probably knew, prepared to resist the general Government as soon as there should be a clear case of outrage for which the Administration at Washington could be held directly responsible. Such a case occurred when the United States marshal placed federal troops in the hands of Sheriff Jones to assist in looting the town of Lawrence. Governor Robinson no longer had any scruples in advising forcible resistance to all who used force to impose upon Kansas a Government which the people had rejected.

In the course of his address Sumner compared Senators Butler and Douglas to Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, saying: "The Senator from South Carolina has read many books of chivalry, and believes himself a chivalrous knight, with sentiments of honor and courage. Of course he has chosen a mistress to whom he has made his vows, and who, though ugly to others, is always lovely to him; though polluted in the sight of the world, is chaste in his sight. I mean the harlot Slavery. Let her be impeached in character, or any proposition be made to shut her out from the extension of her wantonness, and no extravagance of manner or

hardihood of assertion is then too great for the Senator."

When Sumner concluded, the gathering storm broke forth. Cass of Michigan, after saying that he had listened to the address with equal surprise and regret, characterized it as "the most un-American and unpatriotic that ever grated on the ears of the members of that high body." Douglas and Mason were personal and abusive. Douglas, recalling Sumner's answer to Senator Butler's question whether he would assist in returning a slave, renewed the charge made two years earlier that Sumner had violated his oath of office. This attack called forth from Sumner another attempt to defend the one weak point in his speech of 1852, for he was always irritated by reference to this subject, and at the same time he enjoyed a fine facility in the use of language which irritated others.

One utterance in Douglas's reply to Sumner is of special significance in view of what occurred two days later: "Is it his object to provoke some of us to kick him as we would a dog in the street, that he may get sympathy upon the just chastisement?" Two days later Sumner was sitting alone at his desk in the Senate chamber after adjournment when Preston Brooks, a nephew of Senator Butler

and a member of the lower House, entered and accosted him with the statement that he had read Sumner's speech twice and that it was a libel on South Carolina and upon a kinsman of his. Thereupon Brooks followed his words by striking Sumner on the head with a cane. Though the Senator was dazed and blinded by the unexpected attack, his assailant rained blow after blow until he had broken the cane and Sumner lay prostrate and bleeding at his feet. Brooks's remarks in the House of Representatives almost a month after the event leave no doubt of his determination to commit murder had he failed to overcome his antagonist with a cane. He had also taken the precaution to have two of his friends ready to prevent any interference before the punishment was completed. Toombs of Georgia witnessed a part of the assault and expressed approval of the act, and everywhere throughout the South, in the public press, in legislative halls, in public meetings, Brooks was hailed as a hero. The resolution for his expulsion introduced in the House received the support of only one vote from south of Mason and Dixon's Line. A large majority favored the resolution, but not the required two-thirds majority. Brooks, however, thought best to resign but was triumphantly

returned to his seat with only six votes against him. Nothing was left undone to express Southern gratitude, and he received gifts of canes innumerable as symbols of his valor. Yet before his death, which occurred in the following January, he confessed to his friend Orr that he was sick of being regarded as the representative of bullies and disgusted at receiving testimonials of their esteem.

With similar unanimity the North condemned and resented the assault that had been made upon Sumner. From party considerations, if for no other reasons, Democrats regretted the event. Republicans saw in the brutal attack and in the manner of its reception in the South another evidence of the irrepressible conflict between slavery and freedom. They were ready to take up the issue so forcibly presented by their fallen leader. A part of the regular order of exercises at public meetings of Republicans was to express sympathy with their wounded champion and with the Kansas people of the pillaged town of Lawrence, and to adopt ways and means to bring to an end the Administration which they held responsible for these outrages. Sumner, though silenced, was eloquent in a new and more effective way. A half million copies of *The Crime against Kansas* were printed



and circulated. On the issue thus presented, Northern Democrats became convinced that their defeat at the pending election was certain, and their leaders instituted the change in their program which has been described in a previous chapter. They had made an end of the war in Kansas and drew from their candidate for the Presidency the assurance that just treatment should at last be meted out to harassed Kansas.

Though Sumner's injuries were at first regarded as slight, they eventually proved to be extremely serious. After two attempts to resume his place in the Senate, he found that he was unable to remain; yet when his term expired, he was almost unanimously reëlected. Much of his time for three and a half years he spent in Europe. In December, 1859, he seemed sufficiently recovered to resume senatorial duties, but it was not until the following June that he again addressed the Senate. On that occasion he delivered his last great philippic against slavery. The subject under discussion was still the admission of Kansas as a free State, and, as he remarked in his opening sentences, he resumed the discussion precisely where he had left off more than four years before.

Sumner had assumed the task of uttering a final

word against slavery as barbarism and a barrier to civilization. He spoke under the impelling power of a conviction in his God-given mission to utilize a great occasion to the full and for a noble end. For this work his whole life had been a preparation. Accustomed from early youth to spend ten hours a day with books on law, history, and classic literature, he knew as no other man then knew what aid the past could offer to the struggle for freedom. The bludgeon of the would-be assassin had not impaired his memory, and four years of enforced leisure enabled him to fulfill his highest ideals of perfect oratorical form. Personalities he eliminated from this final address, and blemishes he pruned away. In his earlier speeches he had been limited by the demands of the particular question under discussion, but in *The Barbarism of Slavery* he was free to deal with the general subject, and he utilized incidents in American slavery to demonstrate the general upward trend of history. The orator was sustained by the full consciousness that his utterances were in harmony with the grand sweep of historic truth as well as with the spirit of the present age.

Sumner was not a party man and was at no time in complete harmony with his coworkers. It was

always a question whether his speeches had a favorable effect upon the immediate action of Congress; there can, however, be no doubt of the fact that the larger public was edified and influenced. Copies of *The Crime against Kansas* and *The Barbarism of Slavery* were printed and circulated by the million and were eagerly read from beginning to end. They gave final form to the thoughts and utterances of many political leaders both in America and in Europe. More than any other man it was Charles Sumner who, with a wealth of historical learning and great skill in forensic art, put the irrepressible conflict between slavery and freedom in its proper setting in human history.

## CHAPTER XII

### KANSAS AND BUCHANAN

IN view of the presidential election of 1856 Northern Democrats entertained no doubts that Kansas, now occupied by a majority of free-state men, would be received as a free State without further ado. The case was different with the Democrats of western Missouri, already for ten years in close touch with those Southern leaders who were determined either to secure new safeguards for slavery or to form an independent confederacy. Their program was to continue their efforts to make Kansas a slave State or at least to maintain the disturbance there until the conditions appeared favorable for secession.

In February, 1857, the pro-slavery territorial Legislature provided for the election of delegates to a constitutional convention, but Governor Geary vetoed the act because no provision was made for submitting the proposed constitution to

the vote of the people. The bill was passed over his veto, and arrangements were made for registration which free-state men regarded as imperfect, inadequate, or fraudulent.

President Buchanan undoubtedly intended to do full justice to the people of Kansas. To this end he chose Robert J. Walker, a Mississippi Democrat, as Governor of Kansas. Walker was a statesman of high rank, who had been associated with Buchanan in the Cabinet of James K. Polk. Three times he refused to accept the office and finally undertook the mission only from a sense of duty. Being aware of the fate of Governor Geary, Walker insisted on an explicit understanding with Buchanan that his policies should not be repudiated by the federal Administration. Late in May he went to Kansas with high hopes and expectations. But the free-state party had persisted in the repudiation of a Government which had been first set up by an invading army and, as they alleged, had since then been perpetuated by fraud. They had absolutely refused to take part in any election called by that Government and had continued to keep alive their own legislative assembly. Despite Walker's efforts to persuade them to take part in the election of delegates to the constitutional

convention, they resolutely held aloof. Yet, as they became convinced that he was acting in good faith, they did participate in the October elections to the territorial Legislature, electing nine out of the thirteen councilors and twenty-four out of the thirty-nine representatives. Gross frauds had been perpetrated in two districts, and the Governor made good his promise by rejecting the fraudulent votes. In one case a poll list had been made up by copying an old Cincinnati register.

In the meantime, thanks to the abstention of the free-state people, the pro-slavery party had secured absolute control of the constitutional convention. Yet there was the most absolute assurance by the Governor in the name of the President of the United States that no constitution would be sent to Congress for approval which had not received the sanction of a majority of the voters of the Territory. This was Walker's reiterated promise, and President Buchanan had on this point been equally explicit.

When, therefore, the pro-slavery constitutional convention met at Lecompton in October, Kansas had a free-state Legislature duly elected. To make Kansas still a slave State it was necessary to get rid of that Legislature and of the Governor through

whose agency it had been chosen, and at the same time to frame a constitution which would secure the approval of the Buchanan Administration. Incredible as it may seem, all this was actually accomplished.

John Calhoun, who had been chosen president of the Lecompton convention, spent some time in Washington before the adjourned meeting of the convention. He secured the aid of master-hands at manipulation. Walker had already been discredited at the White House on account of his rejection of fraudulent returns at the October election of members to the Legislature. The convention was unwilling to take further chances on a matter of that sort, and it consequently made it a part of the constitution that the president of the convention should have entire charge of the election to be held for its approval. The free-state Legislature was disposed of by placing in the constitution a provision that all existing laws should remain in force until the election of a Legislature provided for under the constitution.

The master-stroke of the convention, however, was the provision for submitting the constitution to the vote of the people. Voters were not permitted to accept or reject the instrument; all votes

were to be for the constitution either "with slavery" or "with no slavery." But the document itself recognized slavery as already existing and declared the right of slave property like other property "before and higher than any constitutional sanction." Other provisions made emancipation difficult by providing in any case for complete monetary remuneration and for the consent of the owners. There were numerous other provisions offensive to free-state men. It had been rightly surmised that they would take no part in such an election and that "the constitution with slavery" would be approved. The vote on the constitution was set for the 21st of December. For the constitution with slavery 6226 votes were recorded and 569 for the constitution without slavery.

While these events were taking place, Walker went to Washington to enter his protest but resigned after finding only a hostile reception by the President and his Cabinet. Stanton, who was acting Governor in the absence of Walker, then called together the free-state Legislature, which set January 4, 1858, as the date for approving or rejecting the Lecompton Constitution. At this election the votes cast were 138 for the constitution



with slavery, 24 for the constitution without slavery, and 10,226 against the constitution. But President Buchanan had become thoroughly committed to the support of the Lecompton Constitution. Disregarding the advice of the new Governor, he sent the Lecompton Constitution to Congress with the recommendation that Kansas be admitted to the Union as a slave State.

Here was a crisis big with the fate of the Democratic party, if not of the Union. Stephen A. Douglas had already given notice that he would oppose the Lecompton Constitution. In favor of its rejection he made a notable speech which called forth the bitterest enmity from the South and arrayed all the forces of the Administration against him. Supporters of Douglas were removed from office, and anti-Douglas men were put in their places. In his fight against the fraudulent constitution Douglas himself, however, still had the support of a majority of Northern Democrats, especially in the Western States, and that of all the Republicans in Congress. A bill to admit Kansas passed the Senate, but in the House a proviso was attached requiring that the constitution should first be submitted to the people of Kansas for acceptance or rejection. This amendment was

finally accepted by the Senate with the modification that, if the people voted for the constitution, the State should have a large donation of public land, but that if they rejected it, they should not be admitted as a State until they had a population large enough to entitle them to a representative in the lower House. The vote of the people was cast on August 2, 1858, and the constitution was finally rejected by a majority of nearly twelve thousand. Thus resulted the last effort to impose slavery on the people of Kansas.

Although the war between slavery and freedom was fought out in miniature in Kansas, the immediate issue was the preservation of slavery in Missouri. This, however, involved directly the prospect of emancipation in other border States and ultimate complete emancipation in all the States. The issue is well stated in a Fourth of July address which Charles Robinson delivered at Lawrence, Kansas, in 1855, after the invasion of Missourians to influence the March election of that year, but before the beginning of bloody conflict:

What reason is given for the cowardly invasion of our rights by our neighbors? They say that if Kansas is allowed to be free the institution of slavery in their own State will be in danger. . . . If the people of Missouri

make it necessary, by their unlawful course, for us to establish freedom in that State in order to enjoy the liberty of governing ourselves in Kansas, then let that be the issue. If Kansas and the whole North must be enslaved, or Missouri become free, then let her be made free. Aye! and if to be free ourselves, slavery must be abolished in the whole country, then let us accept that issue. If black slavery in a part of the States is incompatible with white freedom in any State, then let black slavery be abolished from all. As men espousing the principles of the Declaration of the Fathers, we can do nothing else than accept these issues.

The men who saved Kansas to freedom were not abolitionists in the restricted sense. Governor Walker found in 1857 that a considerable majority of the free-state men were Democrats and that some were from the South. Nearly all actual settlers, from whatever source they came, were free-state men who felt that a slave was a burden in such a country as Kansas. For example, during the first winter of the occupation of Kansas, an owner of nineteen slaves was himself forced to work like a trooper to keep them from freezing; and, indeed, one of them did freeze to death and another was seriously injured.

In spite of all the advertising of opportunity and all the pressure brought to bear upon Southerners to settle in Kansas, at no time did the number of

slaves in the Territory reach three hundred. The climate and the soil made for freedom, and the Governors were not the only persons who were converted to free-state principles by residence in the Territory.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SUPREME COURT IN POLITICS

THE decision and arguments of the Supreme Court upon the Dred Scott case were published on March 6, 1857, two days after the inauguration of President Buchanan. The decision had been agreed upon many months before, and the appeal of the negro, Dred Scott, had been decided by rulings which in no way involved the validity of the Missouri Compromise. Nevertheless, a majority of the judges determined to give to the newly developed theory of John C. Calhoun the appearance of the sanctity of law. According to Chief Justice Taney's dictum, those who made the Constitution gave to those clauses defining the power of Congress over the Territories an erroneous meaning. On numerous occasions Congress had by statute excluded slavery from the public domain. This, in the judgment of the Chief Justice, they had no right to do, and such legislation was

unconstitutional and void. Specifically the Missouri Compromise had never had any binding force as law. Property in slaves was as sacred as property in any other form, and slave-owners had equal claim with other property owners to protection in all the Territories of the United States. Neither Congress nor a territorial Legislature could infringe such equal rights.

According to popular understanding, the Supreme Court declared "that the negro has no rights which the white man is bound to respect." But Chief Justice Taney did not use these words merely as an expression of his own or of the Court's opinion. He used them in a way much more contemptible and inexcusable to the minds of men of strong anti-slavery convictions. He put them into the mouths of the fathers of the Republic, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, framed the Constitution, organized state Governments, and gave to negroes full rights of citizenship, including the right to vote. But how explain this strange inconsistency? The Chief Justice was equal to the occasion. He insisted that in recent years there had come about a better understanding of the phraseology of the Declaration of Independence. The words, "All men are created equal," he admitted,

“would seem to embrace the whole human family, and if they were used in a similar instrument at this day they would be so understood.” But the writers of that instrument had not, he said, intended to include men of the African race, who were at that time regarded as not forming any part of the people. Therefore — strange logic! — these men of the revolutionary era who treated negroes actually as citizens having full equal rights did not understand the meaning of their own words, which could be comprehended only after three-quarters of a century when, forsooth, equal rights had been denied to all persons of African descent.

The ruling of the Court in the Dred Scott case came at a time when Northern people had a better idea of the spirit and teachings of the founders of the Republic regarding the slavery question than any generation before or since has had. The campaign that had just closed had been characterized by a high order of discussion, and it was also emphatically a reading campaign. The new Republican party planted itself squarely on the principles enunciated by Thomas Jefferson, the reputed founder of the old Republican party. They went back to the policy of the fathers, whose words on the subject of slavery they eagerly read. From

this source also came the chief material for their public addresses. To the common man who was thus indoctrinated, the Chief Justice, in describing the sentiments of the fathers respecting slavery, appeared to be doing what Horace Greeley was wont to describe as "saying a thing and being conscious while saying it that the thing is not true."

The Dred Scott decision laid the Republicans open to the charge of seeking by unlawful means to deprive slave-owners of their rights, and it was to the partizan interest of the Democrats to stand by the Court and thus discredit their opponents. This action tended to carry the entire Democratic party to the support of Calhoun's extreme position on the slavery question. Republicans had proclaimed that liberty was national and slavery municipal; that slavery had no warrant for existence except by state enactment; that under the Constitution Congress had no more right to make a slave than it had to make a king; that Congress had no power to establish or permit slavery in the Territories; that it was, on the contrary, the duty of Congress to exclude slavery. On these points the Supreme Court and the Republican party held directly contradictory opinions.

The Democratic platform of 1856 endorsed the



doctrine of popular sovereignty as embodied in the Kansas-Nebraska legislation, which implied that Congress should neither prohibit nor introduce slavery into the Territories, but should leave the inhabitants free to decide that question for themselves, the public domains being open to slave-owners on equal terms with others. But once they had an organized territorial Government and a duly elected territorial Legislature, the residents of a Territory were empowered to choose either slave labor or exclusively free labor. This at least was the view expounded by Stephen A. Douglas, though the theory was apparently rendered untenable by the ruling of the Court which extended protection to slave-owners in all the Territories remaining under the control of the general Government. It followed that if Congress had no power to interfere with that right, much less had a local territorial Government, which is itself a creature of Congress. A state Government alone might control the status of slave property. A Territory when adopting a constitution preparatory to becoming a State would find it then in order to decide whether the proposed State should be free or slave. This was the view held by Jefferson Davis and the extreme pro-slavery leaders. Aided

by the authority of the Supreme Court, they were prepared to insist upon a new plank in future Democratic platforms which should guarantee to all slave-owners equal rights in all Territories until they ceased to be Territories. Over this issue the party again divided in 1860.

Republicans naturally imagined that there had been collusion between Democratic politicians and members of the Supreme Court. Mr. Seward made an explicit statement to that effect, and affirmed that President Buchanan was admitted into the secret, alleging as proof a few words in his inaugural address referring to the decision soon to be delivered. Nothing of the sort, however, was ever proven. The historian Von Holst presents the view that there had been a most elaborate and comprehensive program on the part of the slavocracy to control the judiciary of the federal Government. The actual facts, however, admit of a simpler and more satisfactory explanation.

Judges are affected by their environment, as are other men. The transition from the view that slavery was an evil to the view that it is right and just did not come in ways open to general observation, and probably few individuals were conscious of having altered their views. Leading churches

throughout the South began to preach the doctrine that slavery is a divinely ordained institution, and by the time of the decision in the Dred Scott case a whole generation had grown up under such teaching.

A large proportion of Southern leaders had become thoroughly convinced of the righteousness of their peculiar system. Not otherwise could they have been so successful in persuading others to accept their views. Even before the Dred Scott decision had crystallized opinion, Franklin Pierce, although a New Hampshire Democrat of anti-slavery traditions, came, as a result of his intimate personal and political association with Southern leaders, to accept their guidance and strove to give effect to their policies. President Buchanan was a man of similar antecedents, and, contrary to the expectation of his Northern supporters, did precisely as Pierce had done. It is a matter of record that the arguments of the Chief Justice had captivated his mind before he began to show his changed attitude towards Kansas. In August, 1857, the President wrote that, at the time of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, slavery already existed and that it still existed in Kansas under the Constitution of the United States. "This point,"

said he, "has at last been settled by the highest tribunal known in our laws. How it could ever have been seriously doubted is a mystery." Granted that slavery is recognized as a permanent institution in itself — just and of divine ordinance and especially united to one section of the country — how could any one question the equal rights of the people of that section to occupy with their slaves lands acquired by common sacrifice? Such was undoubtedly the view of both Pierce and Buchanan. It seemed to them "wicked" that Northern abolitionists should seek to infringe this sacred right.

By a similar process a majority of the Supreme Court justices had become converts to Calhoun's newly announced theory of 1847. It undoubtedly seemed strange to them, as it did later to President Buchanan, that any one should ever have held a different view. If the Court with the force of its prestige should give legal sanction to the new doctrine, it would allay popular agitation, ensure the preservation of the Union, and secure to each section its legitimate rights. Such apparently was the expectation of the majority of the Court in rendering the decision. But the decision was not unanimous. Each judge presented an individual

opinion. Five supported the Chief Justice on the main points as to the status of the African race and the validity of the Missouri Compromise. Judge Nelson registered a protest against the entrance of the Court into the political arena. Curtis and McLean wrote elaborate dissenting opinions. Not only did the decision have no tendency to allay party debate, but it added greatly to the acrimony of the discussion. Republicans accepted the dissenting opinions of Curtis and McLean as a complete refutation of the arguments of the Chief Justice; and the Court itself, through division among its members, became a partizan institution. The arguments of the justices thus present a complete summary of the views of the pro-slavery and anti-slavery parties, and the opposing opinions stand as permanent evidence of the impossibility of reconciling slavery and freedom in the same government.

It was through the masterful leadership of Stephen A. Douglas that the Lecompton Constitution was defeated. In 1858 an election was to be held in Illinois to determine whether or not Douglas should be reëlected to the United States Senate. The Buchanan Administration was using its utmost

influence to insure Douglas's defeat. Many eastern Republicans believed that in this emergency Illinois Republicans should support Douglas, or at least that they should do nothing to diminish his chances for reelection; but Illinois Republicans decided otherwise and nominated Abraham Lincoln as their candidate for the senatorship. Then followed the memorable Lincoln-Douglas debates.

This is not the place for any extended account of the famous duel between the rival leaders, but a few facts must be stated. Lincoln had slowly come to the perception that a large portion of the people abhorred slavery, and that the weak point in the armor of Douglas was to be found in the fact that he did not recognize this growing moral sense. Douglas had never been a defender of slavery on ethical grounds, nor had he expressed any distinct aversion to the system. In support of his policy of popular sovereignty his favorite dictum had been, "I do not care whether slavery is voted up or voted down."

This apparent moral obtuseness furnished to Lincoln his great opportunity, for his opponent was apparently without a conscience in respect to the great question of the day. Lincoln, on the contrary, had reached the conclusion not only that

slavery was wrong, but that the relation between slavery and freedom was such that they could not be harmonized within the same government. In the debates he again put forth his famous utterance, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," with the explanation that in course of time either this country would become all slave territory or slavery would be restricted and placed in a position which would involve its final extinction. In other words, Lincoln's position was similar to that of the conservative abolitionists. As we know, Birney had given expression to a similar conviction of the impossibility of maintaining both liberty and slavery in this country, but Lincoln spoke at a time when the whole country had been aroused upon the great question; when it was still uncertain whether slavery would not be forced upon the people of Kansas; when the highest court in the land had rendered a decision which was apparently intended to legalize slavery in all Territories; and when the alarming question had been raised whether the next step would not be legalization in all the States.

Lincoln was a long-headed politician, as well as a man of sincere moral judgments. He was defining issues for the campaign of 1860 and was

putting Douglas on record so that it would be impossible for him, as the candidate of his party, to become President. Douglas had many an uncomfortable hour as Lincoln exposed his vain efforts to reconcile his popular sovereignty doctrine with the Dred Scott decision. As Lincoln expected, Douglas won the senatorship, but he lost the greater prize.

The crusade against slavery was nearing its final stage. Under the leadership of such men as Sumner, Seward, and Lincoln, a political party was being formed whose policies were based upon the assumption that slavery is both a moral and a political evil. Even at this stage the party had assumed such proportions that it was likely to carry the ensuing presidential election. Davis and Yancey, the chief defenders of slavery, were at the same time reaching a definite conclusion as to what should follow the election of a Republican President. And that conclusion involved nothing less than the fate of the Union.



## CHAPTER XIV

JOHN BROWN

THE crusade against slavery was based upon the assumption that slavery, like war, is an abnormal state of society. As the tyrant produces the assassin, so on a larger scale slavery calls forth servile insurrection, or, as in the United States, an implacable struggle between free white persons and the defenders of slavery.

The propaganda of Southern and Western abolitionists had as a primary object the prevention of both servile insurrection and civil war. It was as clear to Southern abolitionists in the thirties as it was to Seward and Lincoln in the fifties that, unless the newly aroused slave power should be effectively checked, a terrible civil war would ensue. To forestall this dreaded calamity, they freely devoted their lives and fortunes. Peaceable emancipation by state action, according to the original program, was prevented by the rise of a

sectional animosity which beclouded the issue. As the leadership drifted into the hands of extremists, the conservative masses were confused, misled, or deceived. The South undoubtedly became the victim of the erroneous teachings of alarmists who believed that the anti-slavery North intended, by unlawful and unconstitutional federal action, to abolish slavery in all the States; while the North had equally exaggerated notions as to the aggressive intentions of the South.

The opposing forces finally met on the plains of Kansas, and extreme Northern opposition became personified in John Brown of Osawatimie. He was born in Connecticut in May, 1800, of New England ancestry, the sixth generation from the *Mayflower*. A Calvinist, a mystic, a Bible-reading Puritan, he was trained to anti-slavery sentiments in the family of Owen Brown, his father. He passed his early childhood in the Western Reserve of Ohio, and subsequently moved from Ohio to New York, to Pennsylvania, to Ohio again, to Connecticut, to Massachusetts, and finally to New York once more. He was at various times tanner, farmer, sheep-raiser, horse-breeder, wool-merchant, and a follower of other callings as well. From a business standpoint he may be regarded as a

failure, for he had been more than once a bankrupt and involved in much litigation. He was twice married and was the father of twenty children, eight of whom died in infancy.

Until the Kansas excitement nothing had occurred in the history of the Brown family to attract public attention. John Brown was not conspicuous in anti-slavery efforts or in any line of public reform. As a mere lad during the War of 1812 he accompanied his father, who was furnishing supplies to the army, and thus he saw much of soldiers and their officers. The result was that he acquired a feeling of disgust for everything military, and he consistently refused to perform the required military drill until he had passed the age for service. Not quite in harmony with these facts is the statement that he was a great admirer of Oliver Cromwell, and Rhodes says of him that he admired Nat Turner, the leader of the servile insurrection in Virginia, as much as he did George Washington. There seems to be no reason to doubt the testimony of the members of his family that John Brown always cherished a lively interest in the African race and a deep sympathy with them. As a youth he had chosen for a companion a slave boy of his own age, to whom he became greatly

attached. This slave, badly clad and poorly fed, beaten with iron shovel or anything that came first to hand, young Brown grew to regard as his equal if not his superior. And it was the contrast between their respective conditions that first led Brown to "swear eternal war with slavery." In later years John Brown, Junior, tells us that, on seeing a negro for the first time, he felt so great a sympathy for him that he wanted to take the negro home with him. This sympathy, he assures us, was a result of his father's teaching. Upon the testimony of two of John Brown's sons rests the oft-repeated story that he declared eternal war against slavery and also induced the members of his family to unite with him in formal consecration to his mission. The time given for this incident is previous to the year 1840; the idea that he was a divinely chosen agent for the deliverance of the slaves was of later development.

As early as 1834 Brown had shown some active interest in the education of negro children, first in Pennsylvania and later in Ohio. In 1848 the Brown family became associated with an enterprise of Gerrit Smith in northern New York, where a hundred thousand acres of land were offered to negro families for settlement. During the excitement

over the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 Brown organized among the colored people of Springfield, Massachusetts, "The United States League of Gileadites." As an organization this undertaking proved a failure, but Brown's formal written instructions to the "Gileadites" are interesting on account of their relation to what subsequently happened. In this document, by referring to the multitudes who had suffered in their behalf, he encouraged the negroes to stand for their liberties. He instructed them to be armed and ready to rush to the rescue of any of their number who might be attacked:

Should one of your number be arrested, you must collect together as quickly as possible, so as to outnumber your adversaries who are taking an active part against you. Let no able-bodied man appear on the ground unequipped, or with his weapons exposed to view: let that be understood beforehand. Your plans must be known only to yourself, and with the understanding that all traitors must die, wherever caught and proven to be guilty. "Whosoever is fearful or afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead" (Judges, vii. 3; Deut. xx. 8). Give all cowards an opportunity to show it on condition of holding their peace. *Do not delay one moment after you are ready: you will lose all your resolution if you do. Let the first blow be the signal for all to engage: and when engaged do not do your work by halves,*

*but make clean work with your enemies, — and be sure you meddle not with any others.* By going about your business quietly, you will get the job disposed of before the number that an uproar would bring together can collect; and you will have the advantage of those who come out against you, for they will be wholly unprepared with either equipments or matured plans; all with them will be confusion and terror. Your enemies will be slow to attack you after you have done up the work nicely; and if they should, they will have to encounter your white friends as well as you; for you may safely calculate on a division of the whites, and may by that means get to an honorable parley.

He gives here a distinct suggestion of the plans and methods which he later developed and extended.

When Kansas was opened for settlement, John Brown was fifty-four years old. Early in the spring of 1855, five of his sons took up claims near Osawatimie. They went, as did others, as peaceable settlers without arms. After the election of March 30, 1855, at which armed Missourians overawed the Kansas settlers and thus secured a unanimous pro-slavery Legislature, the free-state men, under the leadership of Robinson, began to import Sharp's rifles and other weapons for defense. Brown's sons thereupon wrote to their father, describing their helpless condition and urging him to come to their relief. In October, 1855, John Brown

himself arrived with an adequate supply of rifles and some broadswords and revolvers. The process of organization and drill thereupon began, and when the Wakarusa War occurred early in December, 1855, John Brown was on hand with a small company from Osawatomie to assist in the defense of Lawrence. The statement that he disapproved of the agreement with Governor Shannon which prevented bloodshed is not in accord with a letter which John Brown wrote to his wife immediately after the event. The Governor granted practically all that the free-state men desired and recognized their train-bands as a part of the police force of the Territory. Brown by this stipulation became Captain John Brown, commander of a company of the territorial militia.

Soon after the Battle of Wakarusa, Captain Brown passed the command of the company of militia to his son John, while he became the leader of a small band composed chiefly of members of his own family. Writing to his wife on April 7, 1856, he said: "We hear that preparations are making in the United States Court for numerous arrests of free-state men. For one I have not desired (all things considered) to have the slave power cease from its acts of aggression. 'Their

foot shall slide in due time.'” This letter of Brown’s indicates that the writer was pleased at the prospect of approaching trouble.

When, six weeks later, notice came of the attack upon Lawrence, John Brown, Junior, went with the company of Osawatomie Rifles to the relief of the town, while the elder Brown with a little company of six moved in the same direction. In a letter to his wife, dated June 26, 1856, more than a month after the massacre in Pottawatomie Valley, Brown said:

On our way to Lawrence we learned that it had been already destroyed, and we encamped with John’s company overnight. . . . On the second day and evening after we left John’s men, we encountered quite a number of pro-slavery men and took quite a number of prisoners. Our prisoners we let go, but kept some four or five horses. We were immediately after this accused of murdering five men at Pottawatomie and great efforts have been made by the Missourians and their ruffian allies to capture us. John’s company soon afterwards disbanded, and also the Osawatomie men. Since then, we have, like David of old, had our dwelling with the serpents of the rocks and the wild beasts of the wilderness.

There will probably never be agreement as to Brown’s motives in slaying his five neighbors on May 24, 1856. Opinions likewise differ as to the



effect which this incident had on the history of Kansas. Abolitionists of every class had said much about war and about servile insurrection, but the conservative people of the West and South had mentioned the subject only by way of warning and that they might point out ways of prevention. Garrison and his followers had used language which gave rise to the impression that they favored violent revolution and were not averse to fomenting servile insurrection. They had no faith in the efforts of Northern emigrants to save Kansas from the clutches of the slaveholding South, and they denounced in severe terms the Robinson leadership there, believing it sure to result in failure. To this class of abolitionists John Brown distinctly belonged. He believed that so high was the tension on the slavery question throughout the country that revolution, if inaugurated at any point, would sweep the land and liberate the slaves. Brown was also possessed of the belief that he was himself the divinely chosen agent to let loose the forces of freedom; and that this was the chief motive which prompted the deed at Pottawatomie is as probable as any other.

Viewed in this light, the Pottawatomie massacre was measurably successful. Opposing forces

became more clearly defined and were pitted against each other in hostile array. There were reprisals and counter-reprisals. Kansas was plunged into a state of civil war, but it is quite probable that this condition would have followed the looting of Lawrence even if John Brown had been absent from the Territory.

Coincident with the warfare by organized companies, small irregular bands infested the country. Kansas became a paradise for adventurers, soldiers of fortune, horse thieves, cattle thieves, and marauders of various sorts. Spoiling the enemy in the interest of a righteous cause easily degenerated into common robbery and murder. It was chiefly in this sort of conflict that two hundred persons were slain and that two million dollars' worth of property was destroyed.

During this period of civil war the members of the Brown family were not much in evidence. John Brown, Junior, captain of the Osawatomie Rifles, was a political prisoner at Topeka. Swift destruction of their property was visited upon all those members who were suspected of having a share in the Pottawatomie murders, and their houses were burned and their other property was seized. Warrants were out for the arrest of the

elder Brown and his sons. Captain Pate who, in command of a small troop, was in pursuit of Brown and his company, was surprised at Black Jack in the early morning and induced to surrender. Brown thus gained control of a number of horses and other supplies and began to arrange terms for the exchange of his son and Captain Pate as prisoners of war. The negotiations were interrupted, however, by the arrival of Colonel Sumner with United States troops, who restored the horses and other booty and disbanded all the troops. With the Colonel was a deputy marshal with warrants for the arrest of the Browns. When ordered to proceed with his duty, however, the marshal was so overawed that, even though a federal officer was present, he merely remarked, "I do not recognize any one for whom I have warrants."

After the capture of Captain Pate at Black Jack early in June, little is known about Brown and his troops for two months. Apart from an encounter of opposing forces near Osawatomic in which he and his band were engaged, Brown took no share in the open fighting between the organized companies of opposing forces, and his part in the irregular guerrilla warfare of the period is uncertain. Towards the close of the war one of his sons was shot

by a preacher who alleged that he had been robbed by the Browns. After peace had been restored to Kansas by the vigorous action of Governor Geary, Brown left the scene and never again took an active part in the local affairs of the Territory.

John Brown's influence upon the course of affairs in Kansas, like William Lloyd Garrison's upon the general anti-slavery movement of the country, has been greatly misunderstood and exaggerated. Brown's object and intention were fundamentally contradictory to those of the free-state settlers. They strove to build a free commonwealth by legal and constitutional methods. He strove to inaugurate a revolution which would extend to all pro-slavery States and result in universal emancipation. John Brown was in Kansas only one year, and he never made himself at one with those who should have been his fellow-workers but went his solitary way. Only in three instances did he pretend to coöperate with the regular free-state forces. He could not work with them because his conception of the means to be adopted to attain the end was different from theirs. Probably before he left the Territory in 1856, he had realized that his work in Kansas was a failure and that the law-and-order forces were too strong for the execution

of his plans. Certain it is that within a few weeks after his departure he had transferred the field of his operations to the mountains of Virginia. Kansas became free through the persistent determination of the rank and file of Northern settlers under the wise leadership of Governor Robinson. It is difficult to determine whether the cause of Kansas was aided or hindered by the advent of John Brown and the adventurers with whom his name became associated.

During the fall of 1856 and until the late summer of 1857 Brown was in the East raising funds for the redemption of Kansas and for the reimbursement of those who had incurred or were likely to incur losses in defense of the cause. For the equipment of a troop of soldiers under his own command he formulated plans for raising \$30,000 by private subscription, and in this he was to a considerable extent successful. It can never be known how much was given in this way to Brown for the equipment of his army of liberation. It is estimated that George L. Stearns alone gave in all fully \$10,000. Because Eastern abolitionists had lost confidence in Robinson's leadership, they lent a willing ear to the plea that Captain Brown with a well-equipped and trained company of soldiers was

the last hope for checking the enemy. Not only would Kansas become a slave State without such help, it was said, but the institution of slavery would spread into all the Territories and become invincible.

The money was given to Brown to redeem Kansas, but he had developed an alternative plan. Early in the year 1857, he met in New York Colonel Hugh Forbes, a soldier of fortune who had seen service with Garibaldi in Italy. They discussed general plans for an aggressive attack upon the South for the liberation of the slaves, and with these plans the needs of Kansas had little or no connection. "Kansas was to be a prologue to the real drama," writes his latest biographer; "the properties of the one were to serve in the other." In April six months' salary was advanced out of the Kansas fund to Forbes, who was employed at a hundred dollars a month to aid in the execution of their plans. Another significant expenditure of the Kansas fund was in pursuance of a contract with a Mr. Blair, a Connecticut manufacturer, to furnish at a dollar each one thousand pikes. Though the contract was dated March 30, 1857, it was not completed until the fall of 1859, when the weapons were delivered to Brown in Pennsylvania for use at Harper's Ferry.

Instead of rushing to the relief of Kansas, as contributors had expected, the leader exercised remarkable deliberation. When August arrived, it found him only as far as Tabor, Iowa, where a considerable quantity of arms had been previously assembled. Here he was joined by Colonel Forbes, and together they organized a school of military tactics with Forbes as instructor. But as Forbes could find no one but Brown and his son to drill, he soon returned to the East, still trusted by Brown as a coworker. It would seem that Forbes himself wished to play the chief part in the liberation of America.

While he was at Tabor, Brown was urged by Lane and other former associates of his in Kansas to come to their relief with all his forces. There had, indeed, been a full year of peace since Geary's arrival, but early in October there was to occur the election of a territorial Legislature in which the free-state forces had agreed to participate, and Lane feared an invasion from Missouri. But although the appeal was not effective, the election proved a complete triumph for the North. Late in October, after the signal victory of the law-and-order party at the election, Brown was again urged with even greater insistence to muster all his forces

and come to Kansas, and there were hints in Lane's letter that an aggressive campaign was afoot to rid the Territory of the enemy. Instead of going in force, however, Brown stole into the Territory alone. On his arrival, two days after the date set for a decisive council of the revolutionary faction, he did not make himself known to Governor Robinson or to any of his party but persuaded several of his former associates to join his "school" in Iowa. From Tabor he subsequently transferred the school to Springdale, a quiet Quaker community in Cedar County, Iowa, seven miles from any railway station. Here the company went into winter quarters and spent the time in rigid drill in preparation for the campaign of liberation which they expected to undertake the following season.

While he was at Tabor, Brown began to intimate to his Eastern friends that he had other and different plans for the promotion of the general cause. In January, 1858, he went East with the definite intention of obtaining additional support for the greater scheme. On February 22, 1858, at the home of Gerrit Smith in New York, there was held a council at which Brown definitely outlined his purpose to begin operations at some point in the mountains of Virginia. Smith and Sanborn at first



tried to dissuade him, but finally consented to co-operate. The secret was carefully guarded: some half-dozen Eastern friends were apprised of it, including Stearns, their most liberal contributor, and two or three friends at Springdale.

As early as December, 1857, Forbes began to write mysterious letters to Sanborn, Stearns, and others of the circle, in which he complained of ill-usage at the hands of Brown. It appears that Forbes erroneously assumed that the Boston friends were aware of Brown's contract with him and of his plans for the attack upon Virginia; but, since they were entirely ignorant on both points, the correspondence was conducted at cross-purposes for several months. Finally, early in May, 1858, it transpired that Forbes had all the time been fully informed of Brown's intentions to begin the effort for emancipation in Virginia. Not only so, but he had given detailed information on the subject to Senators Sumner, Seward, Hale, Wilson, and possibly others. Senator Wilson was told that the arms purchased by the New England Aid Society for use in Kansas were to be used by Brown for an attack on Virginia. Wilson, in entire ignorance of Brown's plans, demanded that the Aid Society be effectively protected against any such

charge of betrayal of trust. The officers of the Society were, in fact, aware that the arms which had been purchased with Society funds the year before and shipped to Tabor, Iowa, had been placed in Brown's hands and that, without their consent, those arms had been shipped to Ohio and just at that time were on the point of being transported to Virginia. This knowledge placed the officers of the New England Aid Society in a most awkward position. Stearns, the treasurer, had advanced large sums to meet pressing needs during the starvation times in Kansas in 1857. Now the arms in Brown's possession were, by vote of the officers, given to the treasurer in part payment of the Society's debt, and he of course left them just where they were.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of this arrangement Senator Wilson and the public were assured that none of the property given for the benefit of Kansas had been or would be diverted to other purposes by the Kansas Committee. It was decided, however, that on account of the Forbes revelations the attack upon Harper's Ferry must be delayed for one year and

<sup>1</sup> "When the dénouement finally came, however, the public and press did not take a very favorable view of the transaction; it was too difficult to distinguish between George L. Stearns, the benefactor of the Kansas Committee, and George L. Stearns, the Chairman of that Committee." — Villard, *John Brown*, p. 341.

that Brown must go to Kansas to take part in the pending elections.

Though Brown arrived in Kansas late in June, he took no active part in the pending measures for the final triumph of the free-state cause. It is something of a mystery how he was occupied between the 1st of July and the middle of December. Under the pseudonym of "Shubal Morgan" he was commander of a small band in which were a number of his followers in training for the Eastern mission. The occupation of this band is not matter of history until December 20, 1858, when they made a raid into the State of Missouri, slew one white man, took eleven slaves, a large number of horses, some oxen, wagons, much food, arms, and various other supplies. This action was in direct violation of a solemn agreement between the border settlers of State and Territory. The people in Kansas were in terror lest retaliatory raids should follow, as would undoubtedly have happened had not the people of Missouri taken active measures to prevent such reprisals.

Rewards were offered for Brown's arrest, and free-state residents served notice that he must leave the Territory. In the dead of winter he started North with some slaves and many horses,

accompanied by Kagi and Gill, two of his faithful followers. In northern Kansas, where they were delayed by a swollen stream, a band of horsemen appeared to dispute their passage. Brown's party quickly mustered assistance and, giving chase to the enemy, took three prisoners with four horses as spoils of war. In Kansas parlance the affair is called "The Battle of the Spurs." The leaders in the chase were seasoned soldiers on their way to Harper's Ferry with the intention of spending their lives collecting slaves and conducting them to places of safety. For this sort of warfare they were winning their spurs. It was their intention to teach all defenders of slavery to use their utmost endeavor to keep out of their reach. As Brown and his company passed through Tabor, the citizens took occasion at a public meeting to resolve "that we have no sympathy with those who go to slave States to entice away slaves, and take property or life when necessary to attain that end."

A few days later the party was at Grinnell, Iowa. According to the detailed account which J. B. Grinnell gives in his autobiography, Brown appeared on Saturday afternoon, stacked his arms in Grinnell's parlor and disposed of his people and horses partly in Grinnell's house and barn and

partly at the hotel. In the evening Brown and Kagi addressed a large meeting in a public hall. Brown gave a lurid account of experiences in Kansas, justified his raid into Missouri by saying the slaves were to be sold for shipment to the South, and gave notice that his surplus horses would be offered for sale on Monday. "What title can you give?" was the question that came from the audience. "The best — the affidavit that they were taken by black men from land they had cleared and tilled; taken in part payment for labor which is kept back."

Brown again addressed a large meeting on Sunday evening at which each of the three clergymen present invoked the divine blessing upon Brown and his labors. The present writer was told by an eye-witness that one of the ministers prayed for forgiveness for any wrongful acts which their guest may have committed. Convinced of the rectitude of his actions, however, Brown objected and said that he thanked no one for asking forgiveness for anything he had done.

Returning from church on Sunday evening, Grinnell found a message awaiting him from Mr. Werkman, United States marshal at Iowa City, who was a friend of Grinnell. The message in part

read: "You can see that it will give your town a bad name to have a fight there; then all who aid are liable, and there will be an arrest or blood. Get the old Devil away to save trouble, for he will be taken, dead or alive." Grinnell showed the message to Brown, who remarked: "Yes, I have heard of him ever since I came into the State. . . . Tell him we are ready to be taken, but will wait one day more for his military squad." True to his word he waited till the following afternoon and then moved directly towards Iowa City, the home of the marshal, passing beyond the city fourteen miles to his Quaker friends at Springdale. Here he remained about two weeks until he had completed arrangements for shipping his fugitives by rail to Chicago. In the meantime, where was Marshal Werkman of Iowa City? Was he of the same mind as the deputy marshal who had accompanied Colonel Sumner? Two of Brown's men had visited the city to make arrangements for the shipment. The situation was obvious enough to those who would see. The entire incident is an illuminating commentary on the attitude of both government and people towards the Fugitive Slave Law. In March the fugitives were safely landed in Canada and the rest of the horses were sold in Cleveland,

Ohio. The time was approaching for the move on Virginia.

Brown now expended much time and attention upon a constitution for the provisional government which he was to set up. In January and February, 1858, Brown had labored over this document for several weeks at the home of Frederick Douglass at Rochester, New York. A copy was in evidence at the conference with Sanborn and Gerrit Smith in February, and the document was approved at a conference held in Chatham, Canada, on May 8, 1858, just at the time when Forbes's revelations caused the postponement of the enterprise. It is an elaborate constitution containing forty-eight articles. The preamble indicates the general purport:

*Whereas*, Slavery throughout its entire existence in the United States is none other than a most barbarous, unprovoked, and unjustifiable war of one portion of its citizens upon another portion the only conditions of which are perpetual imprisonment and hopeless servitude or absolute extermination; in utter disregard and violation of those eternal and self-evident truths set forth in our Declaration of Independence: *Therefore*, we the citizens of the United States, and the Oppressed People, who, by a decision of the Supreme Court are declared to have no rights which the White Man is bound to respect; together with all other people

degraded by the laws thereof, Do, for the time being ordain and establish for ourselves, the following PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION AND ORDINANCES, the better to protect our Persons, Property, Lives and Liberties and to govern our actions.

Article Forty-six reads:

The foregoing articles shall not be construed so as in any way to encourage the overthrow of any State Government or of the general government of the United States; and look to no dissolution of the Union, but simply to Amendment and Repeal. And our flag shall be the same that our Fathers fought under in the Revolution.

In Article Forty, "profane swearing, filthy conversation, and indecent behavior" are forbidden. The document indicates an obvious intention to effect a revolution by a restrained and regulated use of force.

Mobilization of forces began in June, 1859. Cook, one of the original party, had spent the year in the region of Harper's Ferry. In July the Kennedy farm, five miles from Harper's Ferry, was leased. The Northern immigrants posed as farmers, stock-raisers, and dealers in cattle, seeking a milder climate. To assist in the disguise, Brown's daughter and daughter-in-law, mere girls, joined the community. Even so it was difficult to



allay troublesome curiosity on the part of neighbors at the gathering of so many men with no apparent occupation. Suspicion might easily have been aroused by the assembling of numerous boxes of arms from the West and the thousand pikes from Connecticut. Late in August, Floyd, Secretary of War, received an anonymous letter emanating from Springdale, Iowa, giving information which, if acted upon, would have led to an investigation and stopped the enterprise.

The 24th of October was the day appointed for taking possession of Harper's Ferry, but fear of exposure led to a change of plan and the move was begun on the 16th of October. Six of the party who would have been present at the later date were absent. The march from Kennedy farm began about eight o'clock Sunday evening. Before midnight the bridges, the town, and the arsenal were in the hands of the invaders without a gun having been fired. Before noon on Monday some forty citizens of the neighborhood had been assembled as prisoners and held, it was explained, as hostages for the safety of members of the party who might be taken. During the early forenoon Kagi strongly urged that they should escape into the mountains; but Brown, who was influenced, as he said, by sym-

pathy for his prisoners and their distressed families, refused to move and at last found himself surrounded by opposing forces. Brown's men, having been assigned to different duties, were separated. Six of them escaped; others were killed or wounded or taken prisoners. Brown himself with six of his men and a few of his prisoners made a final stand in the engine-house. This was early in the afternoon. All avenues of escape were now closed. Brown made two efforts to communicate with his assailants by means of a flag of truce, sending first Thompson, one of his men, with one of his prisoners, and then Stevens and Watson Brown with another of the prisoners. Thompson was received but was held as a prisoner; Stevens and Watson Brown were shot down, the first dangerously wounded and the other mortally wounded. Later in the afternoon Brown received a flag of truce with a demand that he surrender. He stated the conditions under which he would restore the prisoners whom he held, but he refused the unconditional surrender which was demanded.

About midnight Colonel Robert E. Lee arrived from Washington with a company of marines. He took full command, set a guard of his own men around the engine-house and made preparation to

effect a forcible entrance at sunrise on Tuesday morning in case a peaceable surrender was refused. Lee first offered to two of the local companies the honor of storming the castle. These, however, declined to undertake the perilous task, and the honor fell to Lieutenant Green of the marines, who thereupon selected two squads of twelve men each to attempt an entrance through the door. To Lee's aide, Lieutenant Stuart, who had known Brown in Kansas, was committed the task of making the formal demand for surrender. Brown and Stuart, who recognized each other instantly upon their meeting at the door, held a long parley, which resulted, as had been expected, in Brown's refusal to yield. Stuart then gave the signal which had been agreed upon to Lieutenant Green, who ordered the first squad to advance. Failing to break down the door with sledge-hammers, they seized a heavy ladder and at the second stroke made an opening near the ground large enough to admit a man. Green instantly entered, rushed to the back part of the room, and climbed upon an engine to command a better view. Colonel Lewis Washington, the most distinguished of the prisoners, pointed to Brown, saying, "This is Osawatomie." Green leaped forward and by thrust or stroke bent

his light sword double against Brown's body. Other blows were administered and his victim fell senseless, and it was believed that the leader had been slain in action according to his wish.

The first of the twelve men to attempt to follow their leader was instantly killed by gunshot. Others rushed in and slew two of Brown's men by the use of the bayonet. To save the prisoners from harm, Lee had given careful instruction to fire no shot, to use only bayonets. The other insurgents were made prisoners. "The whole fight," Green reported, "had not lasted over three minutes."

Of all the prisoners taken and held as hostages, not one was killed or wounded. They were made as safe as the conditions permitted. The eleven prisoners who were with Brown in the engine-house were profoundly impressed with the courage, the bearing, and the self-restraint of the leader and his men. Colonel Washington describes Brown as holding a carbine in one hand, with one dead son by his side, while feeling the pulse of another son, who had received a mortal wound, all the time watching every movement for the defense and forbidding his men to fire upon any one who was unarmed. The testimony is uniform that Brown exercised special care to prevent his men from

shooting unarmed citizens, and this conduct was undoubtedly influential in securing generous treatment for him and his men after the surrender.

For six weeks afterwards, until his execution on the 2d of December, John Brown remained a conspicuous figure. He won universal admiration for courage, coolness, and deliberation, and for his skill in parrying all attempts to incriminate others. Probably less than a hundred people knew beforehand anything about the enterprise, and less than a dozen of these rendered aid and encouragement. It was emphatically a personal exploit. On the part of both leader and followers, no occasion was omitted to drive home the lesson that men were willing to imperil their lives for the oppressed with no hope or desire for personal gain. Brown especially served notice upon the South that the day of final reckoning was at hand.

It is natural that the consequences of an event so spectacular as the capture of Harper's Ferry should be greatly exaggerated. Brown's contribution to Kansas history has been distorted beyond all recognition. The Harper's Ferry affair, however, because it came on the eve of the final election before the war, undoubtedly had considerable influence. It sharpened the issue. It played into

the hands of extremists in both sections. On one side, Brown was at once made a martyr and a hero; on the other, his acts were accepted as a demonstration of Northern malignity and hatred, whose fitting expression was seen in the incitement of slaves to massacre their masters.

The distinctive contribution of John Brown to American history does not consist in the things which he did but rather in that which he has been made to represent. He has been accepted as the personification of the irrepressible conflict.

Of all the men of his generation John Brown is best fitted to exemplify the most difficult lesson which history teaches: that slavery and despotism are themselves forms of war, that the shedding of blood is likely to continue so long as the rich, the strong, the educated, or the efficient, strive to force their will upon the poor, the weak, and the ignorant. Lincoln uttered a final word on the subject when he said that no man is good enough to rule over another man; if he were good enough he would not be willing to do it.

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AMONG the many political histories which furnish a background for the study of the anti-slavery crusade, the following have special value:

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deals especially with the Mexican War and its results. T. C. Smith's *Parties and Slavery* (1906) follows the gradual disruption of parties under the pressure of the slavery controversy.

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